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# Will Eisner's **SPIN** MAGAZINE



**FULL COLOR INSIDE!**  
MR. **MYSTIC**  
AND **LADY LUCK**





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# Will Eisner's **SPIN** MAGAZINE



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# WILL EISNER · WALLY WOOD THE OUTER SPACE SPIRIT

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# THE DEPT. OF LOOSE ENDS...

**W**ith this issue of *The Spirit*, it looks like all of the loose ends are about to be tied up at last!

This is the final issue of the black and white *Spirit Magazine* in its current incarnation as a random compendium of pre- and post-war *Spirit* stories, interviews, new work by Will Eisner, and occasional articles on Eisner's career. Because so many of you have asked for it, and because the market conditions are now right, *The Spirit* IS GOING ALL-COLOUR, on Baxter paper, and — best of all — IT WILL REPRINT ALL THE STORIES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER!!! Fans of the pre-war *Spirit* and Will Eisner's new work will be glad to know that a continuation of this magazine, to be entitled *Will Eisner's Quarterly*, will present Will's new work in black and white, along with interviews — and more full-colour reprints of PRE-WAR *SPIRIT* SECTIONS, like the one in this issue.

The colour *Spirit* comic book will be a bi-monthly, and will contain four episodes per 32-page issue, beginning with the very first story Eisner did after his return from the Army in late 1945. *Will Eisner's Quarterly* will continue with the chronological photo-reproduction of the "lost artwork" episodes which began here in issue No.36.

That means that you'll be able to follow the adventures of *The Spirit*, both pre-war and post-war, just as they were originally published, with no nagging gaps to be bridged by this editorial column. Hurray!

Oh. Right. Before I can bid "The Department of Loose Ends" adieu, there are a few tiny strands to weave into the tapestry, namely, the stories which appear in this, our final issue of *Will Eisner's Spirit Magazine*. Let me just find that darned needle... Okay, let's ravel:

"The Black Queen's Army," Lady Luck in "The Sinclair Jewels," and Mister Mystic in "The Paradise of Lin" all were published on July 7, 1940, in the sixth *Spirit* Section.

Of the three stories, only the *Spirit* episode does not represent a "loose end." We first saw The Black Queen in Section No.3 (reprinted in issue No.38) and here she is again. That ought to suffice, as far as explanations go. The only other point of interest concerning the character is that she is the *only* female antagonist of *The Spirit* who does not bear a "Dickensian" name which describes her or is a pun on a common English phrase.

The *Lady Luck* story, which according to Will was written by Dick French and drawn by Chuck Mazoujian, is one of The Daring Debutante's earliest cases. At this stage in her somewhat checkered career as a crime-fighter, Brenda Banks was still involved in an ongoing quasi-romance subplot with the two policemen whom she "coincidentally" met on almost every case during the first few months of the strip. Chief Hardy Moore and his bumbling sidekick Officer Feeny O'Mye represent the typical Irish Cop stereotypes of the period, and it wasn't too long before Lady Luck abandoned them for a more adventurous life of her own. Because she was a "society girl" in her non-costumed identity, many of Lady Luck's early escapades involved jewel thefts and other crimes perpetrated against the rich. This tale is representative of the genre and serves as an ample introduction to the character.

*Mr. Mystic* was the offspring of a creative collaboration between Will Eisner and the talented S.R. "Bob" Powell. Several years before the inauguration of the *Spirit* Section, Will had created, written and drawn a series for overseas syndication called *Yarko the Great*. This feature was also run in America in cut-and-paste form, where it was published by Victor Fox. Eisner's involvement with *Yarko* terminated when he dissolved his partnership with Jerry Iger, and he simply transferred the idea of the turbaned and cloaked mystic detective over to his new company when he began work on the *Spirit* Section. He wrote the first story (in which it was revealed that Mr. Mystic is "an American named

...continued on page 64

## Will EISNER'S SPIRIT MAGAZINE

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JUNE 1983 • NO. 41

Will Eisner's *SPIRIT MAGAZINE*. Published bi-monthly by Kitchen Sink Comix, a division of Krupp Comic Works, Inc., No.2 Swamp Road, Princeton, WI 54968. ISSN No. 0279-5523. Subscription rates: \$18 a year (6 issues) in North America. \$21/year elsewhere (sea mail) or \$31/year airmail. Second class postage paid at Princeton, WI. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Spirit Magazine*, No.2 Swamp Rd., Princeton, WI 54968. Contents copyright©1983 by Will Eisner. All rights reserved under Universal Copyright Convention. The name "The Spirit" is registered by the U.S. Patent Office, Marca Registrada, Marque Deposee. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher. Printed in USA. Wholesale inquiries invited.

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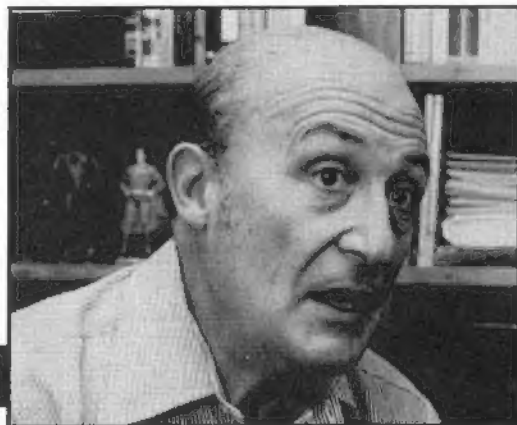
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COMIC  
BOOK  
SECTION

RADIO STATION  
**WLXX**

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1941

ACTION  
Mystery  
ADVENTURE

# THE SPIRIT

BY Will Eisner

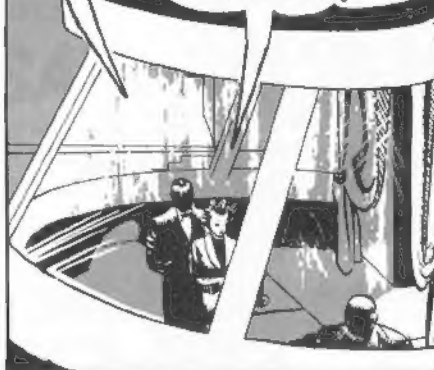




IN THE CONTROL ROOM OF STATION WLXK, THREE GRIM PEOPLE AWAIT THE SIGNAL TO GO ON THE AIR....

BUT, MISS DALE... YOU CAN'T... IT'LL RUIN US!

I'LL WORRY ABOUT THAT... THIS IS MY RADIO STATION... AND I'LL PRESENT THE NEWS AS I SEE FIT!



I'LL NOT BE A MOUTHPIECE FOR A FIFTH COLUMN... WHY, LISTEN TO THIS NOTE... YOU WILL REPORT THAT THE LEADER MARCHED INTO BAROVIA AMID THE CHEERS OF THE THRONGS... OUR CORRESPONDENTS REPORT OTHERWISE... SO I'D BE REPORTING A LIE!

BUT, THEY THREATEN TO BLOW US UP!



WHY DON'T YOU AT LEAST NOTIFY COMMISSIONER DOLAN, MARION?

I DID... HE SAID HE'LL INVESTIGATE .... THAT'LL TAKE WEEKS!



THERE'S THE SIGNAL.... ONE SIDE!... I'LL ANNOUNCE THE NEWS MYSELF TODAY... THIS IS AMERICA!!... NO ONE PUSHES ME AROUND!



NOW, LET US LOOK IN ON THE SPIRIT IN WILDWOOD CEMETERY... WITH HIS FAITHFUL ASSISTANT EBONY, THE GREAT CRIME-FIGHTER LISTENS TO MARION DALE'S NEWS BROADCAST....

...FLASH... THE PEOPLE OF BAROVIA STOOD IN SOLEMN LINES TODAY AS THEY SAW THE HATEFUL LEADER MARCH VICTORIOUSLY INTO THEIR ONCE-FREE COUNTRY....



YES.. BUT THAT'S ONLY A SHALLOW VICTORY... FORCE IS ONLY TEMPORARY AND THE LEADER WILL BE CRUSHED, JUST AS THE OTHERS BEFORE HIM...



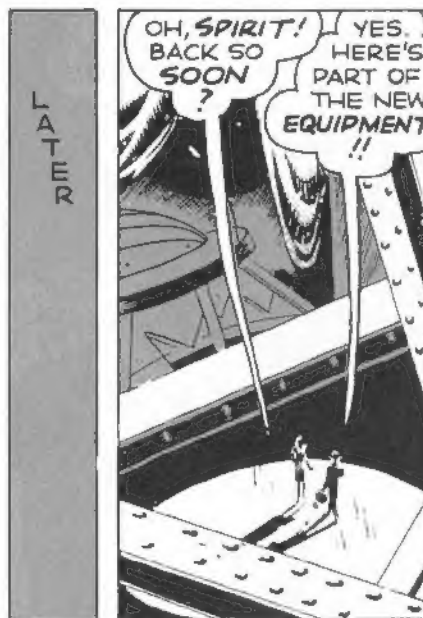
GOLLY! MUSTA BEEN A POW'FUL TUBE DONE BLOWED UP!

THAT WAS NO TUBE, EBONY!



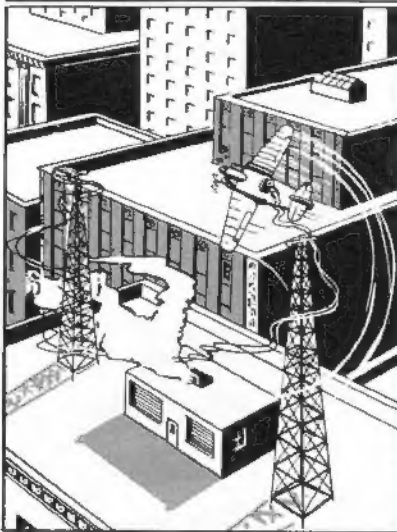
THAT WAS A BLAST AT THE STATION!! SOMEONE BLEW UP THE RADIO STATION...!! ...SOMEONE'S IN TROUBLE!







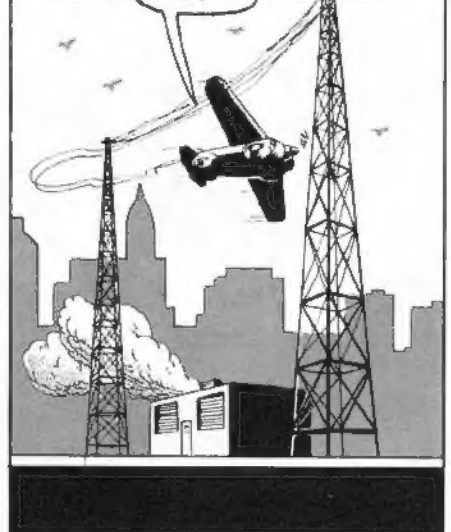
HIGH ABOVE THE WRECKED  
STATION THE SPIRIT AND  
EBONY WORK SWIFTLY...



GUESS AN ANTENNA WAS  
NEVER STRUNG LIKE THIS  
BEFORE, EH, EBONY?



NO SUH, MIST' SPIRIT BOSS....  
AN' AH HOPE IT NEVER WILL  
BE!



BACK IN THE STUDIO....

NOW JUST A LITTLE MORE  
ADJUSTING FOR THE TELEVISION  
RECEIVERS...THERE IT IS!

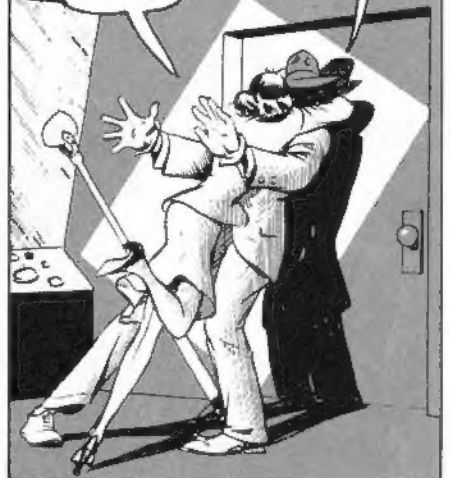


BUT WAIT...WE NEED NOW  
A PROGRAM!... DON'T BE  
ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE FLUSTERED..  
WE... WE'LL PRESENT A  
PLAY ENTITLED....  
HOW FIFTH COLUMN-  
ISTS TRIED TO  
CONTROL THIS  
NETWORK...AND  
WE'LL ALL PLAY IN IT!



OOH, SPIRIT!!...  
YOU'RE  
WONDERFUL!~

HEY!!...  
...NO...  
ULP...



WELL, WHAT'S EVERYONE  
STARING AT?!!... AHM  
COME ON. LET'S GO!!



MEANWHILE AT THE HOME OF  
POLICE COMMISSIONER DOLAN

I'M SORRY, MR. CONRAD..  
BUT I'M AFRAID I'LL  
HAVE TO INVESTIGATE  
THAT CAMPSITE BEFORE  
I ISSUE YOU A  
PERMIT.

OH.. THAT'S  
SO  
UNNEC-  
ESSARY..  
BUT IF YOU  
MUST... HA HA!!  
THIS RED TAPE  
!!









AT COMMISSIONER DOLAN'S

THE SPIRIT !!  
THAT'S WHO IT IS...  
...NOW, WHAT'S  
HE DOING ON  
THE RADIO?

OH...  
I'LL  
TURN  
IT  
OFF!

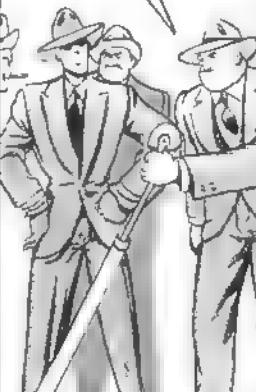


NO! HOLD ON,  
CONRAD... I THINK  
I WANT TO HEAR  
THIS... THE  
SPIRIT'S UP TO  
SOMETHING, I'LL  
WAGER..



AT WLXX...

WELL, SUCKER... WE  
WARNED YOU WITH  
THAT BOMB... BUT  
NOW WE MEAN  
BUSINESS!



AH. AH. MUST'N'T  
TOUCH THAT MIKE  
WE NEED IT!

OKAY, WISE  
GUY IF  
IT'S FIGHT  
YA WANT...



... YOU'LL GET  
PLENTY!



HELLO..  
POLICE!!

NO YOU  
DON'T,  
LADY!



I ASK YOU.. WAS THAT A  
GENTLEMANLY THING  
TO DO ???



BOY OH BOY,  
CAN HE FIGHT!

GIVE IT TO HIM,  
SPIRIT!

MUST BE  
FIGHTIN' A  
MILLION  
GUYS!

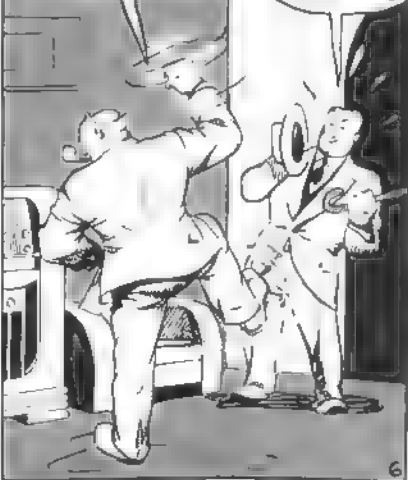
QUIT SHOVIN'  
SKINNY.. IT'S  
MY RADIO!

WHEE! HE  
JUST SOCKED  
A GUY ON THE  
SNOUT. I HEARD  
THE CRUNCH!



BY GOLLY... WHAT  
A FIGHT!... GIVE  
'IM THE OLD ONE-  
TWO, SPIRIT!

ER. AH. I'LL  
BE  
LEAVING  
NOW, MR.  
DOLAN!





MEANWHILE AT STATION WLXK...









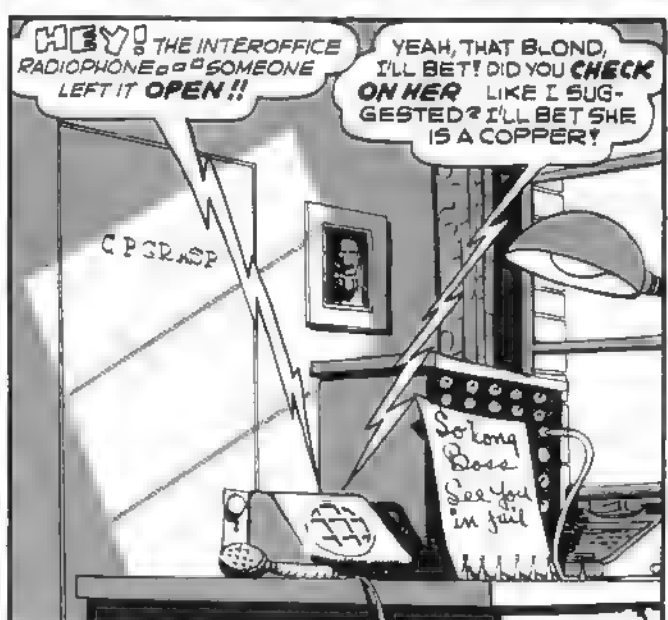
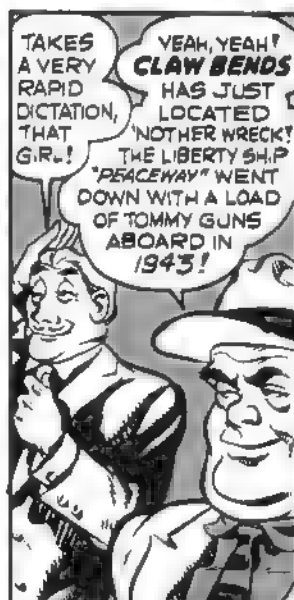
SUNDAY, JULY 28, 1946











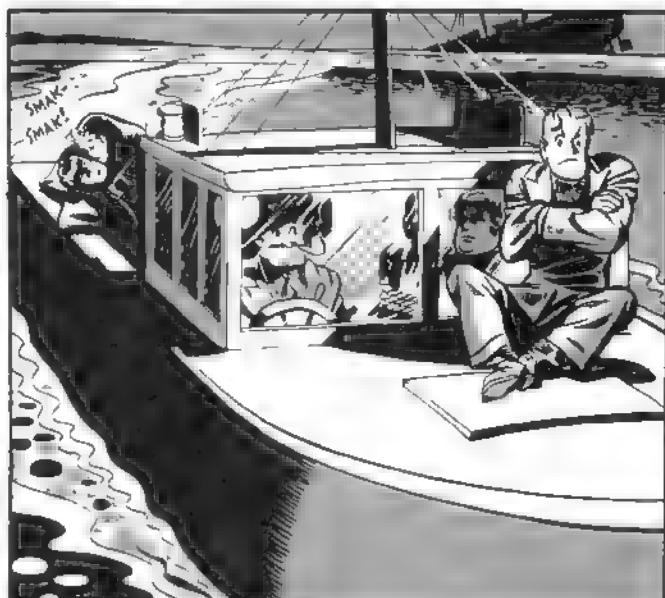














# C.C. BECK

*Chief artist in the creation of the Golden Age Captain Marvel, Charles Clarence Beck ran the Fawcett Publications Comic Art Department from 1940 to 1953. On January 18, 1983 Will Eisner spoke with him.*

EISNER: By the way, what are you called by your friends, C.C.?

BECK: Right, C.C. That means yes, yes, you know?

EISNER: [laughter] Well, here I am at C. C. Beck's studio in Lake Wales, Florida, surrounded by a huge collection of marvelous reproductions of ancient weapons and tools, swords and handguns. Very impressive. They all look so real it was unbelievable when I learned they were all made of balsa wood and cardboard.

EISNER: We want a shop conversation here and I'll want to know a number of things, such as how you work and your philosophy of work and the philosophy of the cartoonist for openers... I started in comics shortly after I got out of high school, late '36, early '37, and was working for *Wow* magazine. This is before *Superman* and *Batman*. *Wow* went under, and I went out on my own to start producing comic books for magazine publishers, particularly the pulp publishers who were coming down at the time. Pulp were falling apart. Where were you at this time?

BECK: I'd been working at Fawcett since about 1934, I think.

EISNER: Now Fawcett originally built its house on the magazine, *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang*...I understand?

BECK: Right. That came to be *Whiz* comics and Billy and Captain Marvel. Well, there's Captain Billy right there, see? I was working on the cartoon books.

EISNER: Now what do you mean by cartoon books?

BECK: Well, they were a little bigger than a comic book and they had single page cartoons. They were something like college humor, you know, a fellow and a girl and then there'd be some kind of punch line.

EISNER: Oh, I see, but they were a small size paperback?

BECK: No, they were a big magazine.

EISNER: Were they like *Judge* or *Ballyhoo* or that kind of thing? I was selling that at my newsstand in 1932.

BECK: Yeah, *Ballyhoo* and *Smokehouse Monthly*. *Smokehouse* and *Whiz Bang* were small. Then I also illustrated some of their other things, in straight illustration form and they put out a magazine called *For Men* just before the comics and it was all humorous stuff. I illustrated articles by Will Cuppy and different people, sometimes in comic style, sometimes straight. And then, as you said, pulps were folding up at the time, *Argosy* and *Blue Book* and all that. That's where Pete Costanza and so many of those guys came from, out of the westerns.

EISNER: Well, sure, I was doing a few illustrations for Popular Publication, Street & Smith pulps, westerns and detectives.

BECK: And I figure it was a godsend for the publisher because at that time, as always, the typographers were taking all the money, as were the printers. They found that they could get a cartoonist to letter a whole page of copy for \$1.00. They'd bypass all those typesetters and typesetters.

EISNER: [laughter] Well, I was selling comics at \$5.00 a page in those days, but for entirely different reasons. Before we

get back into that historical stuff I want to know a little bit about where you came from. I came out of a Bronx high school and got a job in the *New York American* and then later on at the *World Telegram*. When I left there I was out on the street looking for a job until I got into *Wow* magazine. Where'd you come from? Were you a New Yorker?

BECK: No, no, Minnesota. That's where Fawcett was originally, in Robbinsdale, Minnesota. Then they moved East and left just a skeleton staff behind to run out their lease or something and I didn't come East till a year later. I went to work for Fawcett in '34. I got out of high school in 1927 and then I went to the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts for a year. That was just before the Crash. Everything was booming. I got a real good job in a lampshade factory drawing comic characters. Smitty was one and Orphan Annie was another. Handpainted lampshades. They had permits from all the syndicates. Then I went to work for Fawcett in 1934, as I said, as a staff illustrator and I worked on their comic magazines including *Smokehouse Monthly* and so on. I moved East in '36.

EISNER: I see. The reason I'm questioning you about that is that I believe geographic origin impinges on style of art considerably. When you determined what you wanted to do, were you serious about being a cartoonist, or were you dreaming, when you were at the Art Institute, of being a painter or what were your....?

BECK: Well, the director of the school came around and gave us a little preview of what he thought we could be and he thought I would be a fine children's illustrator. The same thing happened to Kurt



Schaffenberg. He was going to be an illustrator; he's one of the old timers still working at DC drawing *Captain Marvel* and so on.

EISNER: Oh, is that right? I don't know him.

BECK: Well, everybody in the fan field knows him. I always enjoyed humor because I grew up on *Whiz Bang*, which was Captain Billy's first magazine. A lot of the guys, like Ed Robbins who just died, first saw my work in *Whiz Bang*. I much admired the variety in cartooning. One guy would work in charcoal. Another guy'd do multi-line or full color. My job was imitating all those different styles. I've got one up there you can see that's an imitation of Don Martin's style. So I got an all around education. I didn't just draw *Superman* all the time like so many kids today do. They just never draw anything else.

EISNER: So, you're really pretty analytical about everyone else's style. In order to emulate a style you must really understand it. So you must have spent some time analyzing comics.

BECK: Well, in my twenties it was just subconscious, it just soaked in, like learning how to speak without an accent. If you try it later, you can never do it again.

EISNER: We all imitated at one time or another and I advocate it, as a teacher. I encourage students at the earliest stages to imitate if they have to for a period of time, pretty much the way you imitate your father when you're learning to tie your shoelace...

BECK: Or on a job, the foreman shows you how to make the moves...

EISNER: But imitation for the purpose of being able to understand what a man's doing and why he does it.

BECK: And it's got to be ground in to your muscle and nerves. It doesn't stay in your head. It's just like playing a piano or skiing, you can't do it consciously.

EISNER: Oh, that's a good point. You're not conscious of it when you're working (much the way somebody might be carving wood), reciting to yourself "now I'm going to hold the tool this way or turn it this way." How do you feel about it?

BECK: Yeah, it's pretty much like playing piano. If you stop to think about it, what's the next note and so on, you can't play it. It's got to be automatic and not until then will you start to produce anything. There are thousands of artists working in shops all over and in newspaper offices all over that do just mechanical work. Out of that training a few of them go on to become producing artists. Some of them, some staff cartoonists, are very good. We've got one in a paper near here, Joe Escourido, who draws in any style, broad cartoon or straight illustration.

EISNER: And he's a staff illustrator? On what paper?

BECK: The *Lakeland Ledger*. I tell young kids to take a job any place, any newspaper or print shop or anything and get that



**W**HENEVER BILLY BATSON, FAMOUS BOY NEWSCASTER, SAYS THE WORD "SHAZAM" HE IS MIRACULOUSLY CHANGED INTO POWERFUL CAPTAIN MARVEL, THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTAL, WHO COMBINES IN HIS MAGNIFICENT PHYSIQUE THE POWERS OF SIX OF THE MIGHTIEST HEROES OF ALL TIME!



The Captain Marvel legend (1946)

mechanical background so that you don't have to stop and think about what brush you want to use and you get rid of those big heavy mechanical lines. You just automatically lighten your line, darken it, thicken it, throw in the shadows where they're needed and so on.

EISNER: I guess a lot depends on how you think! When I'm working...I'm thinking...constantly!! Now, there's a certain amount of things I do automatically, as you say,

like a ball player or a piano player. I'm not really worried about what my brush is going to do next. I know what it's going to do. Or when to use a pen and when to use a brush. My work breaks up into various stages, the planning stage, the framing stage and the execution or inking stage. How do you do it? How does it work with you?

BECK: Same way.

EISNER: Do you spend a lot of time planning?

BECK: Oh yeah. Whenever I have time I do everything on tissue first. I have one here. They wanted a drawing of Captain Marvel flying around Bok Tower, which is a landmark here.

EISNER: You work it out on tissue or tracing paper and then what do you do...trace it over?

BECK: I work on one side first and then I turn it over and correct it on this side.

EISNER: Oh, you do! That's unique! I've never done that.

BECK: It's like a mirror. Then I erase this side and take it up on this side.

EISNER: Oh, very clever idea. The closest thing I've ever heard of anyone doing that was my father! He was a painter for a while and when he finished a painting or made the basic framing of the painting, he'd hold it up to a mirror and he'd look at it.

BECK: That's the way I used to work with a mirror in one hand all the time.

EISNER: Is that right? Where'd you learn that? Is that something you've done for years or figured it out yourself?

BECK: It's an old trick. Michelangelo and all those guys used to use it.

EISNER: How about that! I don't work on tracing papers. I rarely ever do. I work directly on the board after I make a rough thumbnail of what I'm going to do on a sheet of paper and then I work right on the board. I've always been under time pressure.

BECK: Well, I have plenty of time now. I keep everything in tracings because every once in a while somebody wants a copy.

EISNER: Well, back when you were doing comics you didn't use tracing paper. You didn't have time for that, did you?

BECK: Well, for the covers I did.

EISNER: But for the regular panels you didn't? Did you make thumbnails on your regular panels?

BECK: Well, the scripts were so well written there was usually only one way you could possibly lay them out.

EISNER: I see. So, you'd take the script and just do the penciling.

BECK: I'd turn that over to one of our layout men like Ed Robbins, who'd just lay it out, just follow the story.

EISNER: Lay it out! You mean with rough stick figures, that kind of thing?

BECK: Yeah, big head, little head, three guys in the background, that kind of thing, and then get the lettering in. One of the first jobs I got was in Chicago working for 19

a syndicated cartoonist, doing his lettering. He would always have me letter everything first and if there was any room left then he'd draw in it.

EISNER: Well, I've always thought the lettering should go in first.

BECK: That's what they buy. They're buying the lettering, they're not buying the pictures.

EISNER: Well, that's not exactly why I do it! My theory is that the lettering is a part of the whole message...visual as well as text, so I approach the panel as a total composition. I always have. The balloons or the lettering, after being placed...positioned, must be inked in first as far as I'm concerned so that everything else can be built around it.

BECK: I don't know if you're used to working with so many assistants as I was, but by having the lettering put in right after the layout, everybody that worked on it down the line could read the copy as he went along, and see what he was supposed to be doing.

EISNER: When you say, "so many assistants," how did it work? A writer, you mean, would give you full direction in the script? You say you got it fairly well detailed, right?

BECK: No, they didn't say, "in the right foreground draw this and in the background draw that." They would just say, "Billy enters a large hall where there's a table full of impressive looking people sitting." That was all. Then it was up to you to show it.

EISNER: Ahh, they they'd give you the dialogue. Now, the composition was designed by the second man. He would do what you call the layout. Using that example, Billy enters a large hall, the question of whether Billy enters from panel left or panel right was determined by your layout man.

BECK: If the copy said, "Billy: Hi there fellows. Fellows: Hi there, Billy," then Billy's on the left and the fellows are on the right so it would read properly.

EISNER: I see, so then, nobody made a composition until the lettering was determined. The intermediate man was the "layout man." Did you call him layout man, by the way?

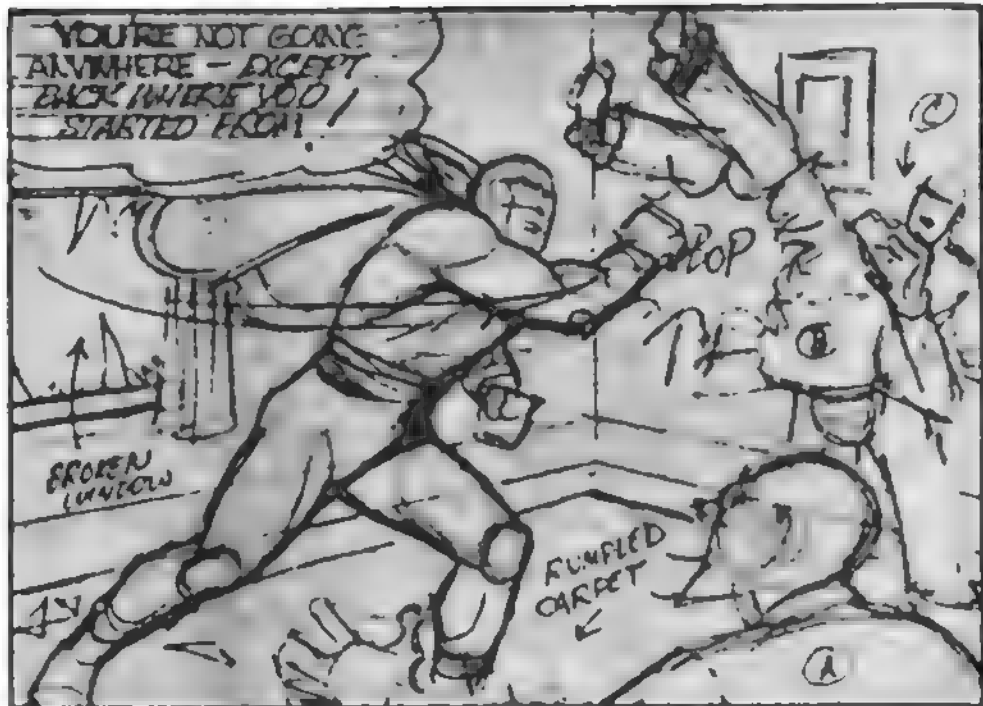
BECK: Yes.

EISNER: You say he would position the balloons and then he would position the characters and the furniture and all the other elements that went into that panel. They would be done by either a squiggle or a circle or a couple of stick figures or whatever he chose to use. Then it would go to you.

BECK: No, then it would go to the lettering man, to ink in the lettering.

EISNER: Then where would it go?

BECK: Then it would come back to the people who drew in the main characters. Now if there was a new character in the story, we'd try to have the same man draw that character wherever he appeared in the story. There were a lot of things that just



The Fawcett approach to comics in 1942. Step 1: the action and dialogue is laid out in pencil with characters labeled and special directions for background details.



STEP 2: Dialogue lettered in and Captain Marvel figure pencilled tighter.

anybody could draw--fire hydrants, trees and so on. After we got the main figures in, the heroes and the villain and so on, then the secondary figures...

EISNER: Well, who did the main figures? Did you?

BECK: I did and...

EISNER: I want to know when it came to you. When did this page finally come to you?

BECK: Well, I had three or four assistants that drew pretty good Captain Marvels,

too. We had a studio out in Englewood, New Jersey, where the drawing was done. I was in New York. They would finish the whole thing and send it to me. Then I would usually redraw the faces and leave the other things alone.

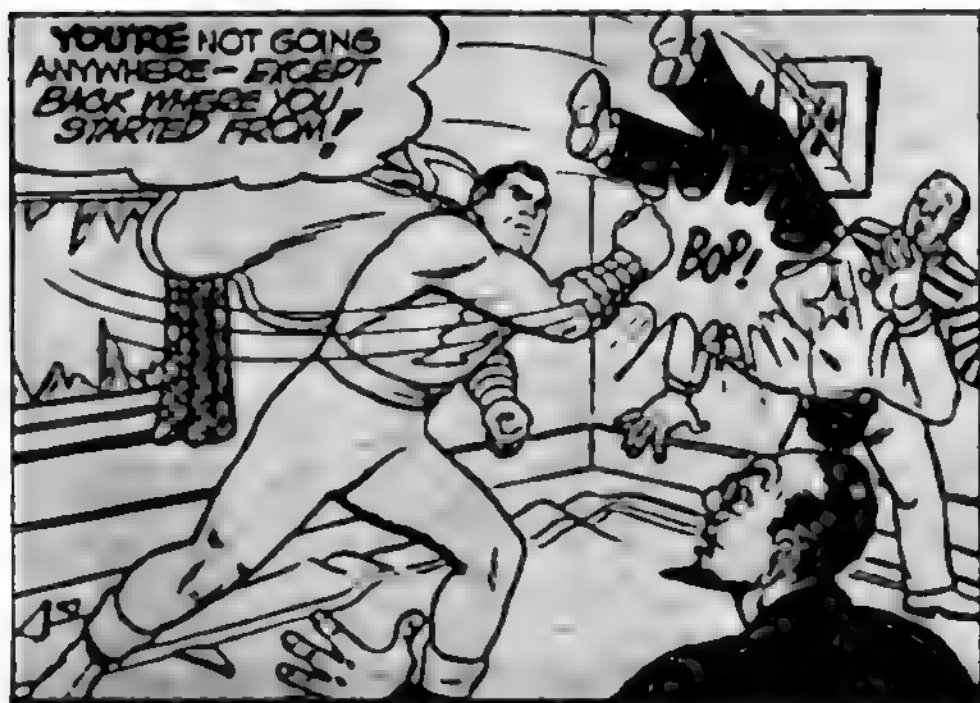
EISNER: So all the other stuff was done by everybody else but you. All you did was the heads? Are we talking about *Captain Marvel*?

BECK: Mostly. But we did others, too, such as *Captain Tootsie*.





STEP 3: Secondary figures and background pencilled tighter, with other details added or changes made.



STEP 4: Panel is inked and all pencil lines are erased.

EISNER: Well, was *Captain Marvel* the first comic you did?

BECK: No, I also drew *Spy Smasher* and *Ibis*. For about the first year, I did everything myself, including the lettering.

EISNER: That's what I want to get to. So, during the first year of *Captain Marvel* you did everything, including the lettering. How about the writing?

BECK: No, I only wrote one or two stories and they had to be planned...

EISNER: Who wrote the first *Captain Mar-*

*vel*?

BECK: Bill Parker.

EISNER: He was a writer on the staff?

BECK: Yes. He wrote the whole first issue of *Whiz*, which came out in January of 1940. He wrote several issues and then it expanded so fast that they opened up a room and suddenly there was an editorial staff and...

EISNER: I see. At first *Captain Marvel*, *Whiz Magazine*, that was written by Parker, you did the layouts then, and the pen-

cing and inking and everything else until it became so demanding that you had to get assistants.

BECK: A few months after that they started *Captain Marvel Adventures* and Jack Kirby did the first issue of that. And a couple of other guys did the second issue, but they were so bad that Fawcett decided to have it all kept in the shop where we could keep control.

EISNER: You mean they weren't happy with Kirby's approach?

BECK: He was only about 17 at the time and some issues were done by the Harry Chesler studio.

EISNER: Yes, yes, I remember Harry A. Chesler.

BECK: It didn't hang together at all because it was produced, you know, kind of slapdash...

EISNER: Was that before or after *Superman*?

BECK: That was a couple of years after *Superman* first appeared.

EISNER: Hmm, then I figure that had to be after Kirby left my shop because Kirby was working in my shop about '37, '38.

BECK: He must have been just a teenager then?

EISNER: He's about my age. I was 22 in 1939, so he must have been about 18. [chuckle] All this talk about age is depressing. Jack was still very young when I last saw him.

BECK: I thought he was still in his fifties.

EISNER: I think he's younger than I am. He looks younger than I do, but then he's got more hair than I do. [laughter]

BECK: Jules Feiffer must have been a...

EISNER: Well, when Jules came into my shop (much later, after World War II), I'd say he's roughly 10-12 years younger than I. I don't think that ratio has changed much...I'm about 13 years younger than Milton Caniff and Feiffer is about 10 years younger than I. At Eisner and Iger, I was about the same age as everybody else in the shop...except for Jerry Iger.

BECK: I was the old man in the shop because I was thirty years old.

EISNER: Let's get back to the first year of *Captain Marvel*. I know very little about it and I'm interested in it. You took the script that Parker gave you, took his dialogue, positioned his dialogue, right?

BECK: Yes.

EISNER: And then made your layouts and compositions and then began to pencil and ink. Did you use a pen for inking?

BECK: Brush.

EISNER: You always used a brush?

BECK: Yeah.

EISNER: Good. And your backgrounds, also a brush or pen?

BECK: All brush.

EISNER: In those days you didn't use tissue layouts, you just worked right on the board.

BECK: As we started to expand, the art director sent me out to all the art schools 21

to try to get the brightest students. We found some pretty good ones that way but they were too inexperienced. So, I said, "Well, let's get some established illustrators." That's where Pete Costanza came in and three or four other guys. Pete was my partner all the way through. We never knew which one of us was going to get drafted. It turned out that he was and I wasn't.

EISNER: And where is he now?

BECK: He's in Hasbrouck Heights. He had a stroke a couple of years ago and lost the use of his right arm. But I heard he can paint with his left arm. He's giving classes in oil painting.

EISNER: Were you on salary with Fawcett?

BECK: No, we were on a freelance basis. We were on the Fawcett staff for the better part of a year but it got too big. You can't produce creative work from nine to five. Sometimes you have to stay up all night, weekends, and everything else. You couldn't do that on staff. By putting us on a page basis, we could make as much money as we wanted to. You know, a guy could turn out \$50 a page. That's what I got, which would be equal to \$500 today.

EISNER: When did you get \$50 a page? What years?

BECK: From the time I went out on my own, about 1940.

EISNER: About World War II time? Well, that's an enormous price because nobody, around the 40's, during the War, was getting \$50 a page. I think Jack Kirby and Joe Simon were getting about \$20 or \$25 a page and they were at the top then. O.K., so you and Pete formed this partnership and began turning out the stuff. You began looking for talent. You started looking for known artists, right?

BECK: I made up a little book of how to cartoon and how not to. Wish I had that yet. I had samples in there drawn by some of the different artists. One I remember showed a guy with a very calm, dead-looking face sitting at a desk with his mouth shut. The balloon said, "Help, somebody help me!" That's how *not* to illustrate. Another sample I put in was from *Little Orphan Annie*. Do you know what hay is?

EISNER: Yeah, I sure do! When I started out, working in the *New York American*, the old timers there would refer to cross-hatching as hay. Recently I was talking to Joe Simon and he referred to it as hay.

BECK: Then we'd usually *stipple* around the top of a panel to kind of set the balloon off.

EISNER: [chuckle] A lot of old time strips did that!

BECK: We used things from *Smitty* and *Barney Google* and all the comics that I'd grown up on. That's where Captain Marvel staff got what they called, quote, "cartoony yuk" style that the young kids today are just horrified by. I don't mean the

They love *Garfield* and they love *Doonesbury* and all those cartoons. But the publishers don't.

EISNER: Well, I think publishers are generally trying to be responsive to the market. It depends on which publishers you talk about. Newspaper publishers are not at all interested in adventure and realistic strips any more.

BECK: I was at a convention in Minneapolis a few months ago and met a young lady there, a representative of Marvel Comics, who spends all her time going around talking to distributors. She says they're trying to put out some humorous stuff but the distributors won't take it. They're so conservative. They say, "Don't change anything, just keep it the way it is, even if it's going downhill, just keep it the way it is."

EISNER: Well, like the Army, publishers are always fighting the battles of yesterday's war, the theory comes *after* the fact in their case.

BECK: But like the Marvel bunch, there are some young people in there who are trying to liven things up and get a little variety and so on and I see even DC is putting out funny animals.

EISNER: They're doing new things now. According to Joe Kubert they're really trying! I think a lot of fresh winds are blowing through this industry. I find it very stimulating to be part of this world. As I see it, the field has divided itself into two parts, the traditional, standard comic book houses, of which there are only two left. Harvey Publication, by the way, just went under, you know. They were the last of the older comic book houses that were devoting themselves to children's funny stories. I believe the *Archie* company is still functioning.

BECK: I understand DC isn't making money either, but being part of Warner Communications, for the value of *Superman* they're being subsidized. If they were all by themselves, they'd be in a lot of trouble.

EISNER: Ah, I have no information on that. Well, in conversations with the distributors of newsstand comic books, they groan over the fact that comic book sales (the old-fashioned kind, the ones that used to be 10 cents), are dropping. On the other hand, if you're talking about the new comic book stores, that are proliferating now, they're doing enormously well. There are now almost 3,000 of them in this country, where fifteen years ago there were maybe one hundred, not even that. I think what's happening is that the market place is changing the course of comic book history. Certainly the standards will be affected!

BECK: I'd like to say something about the War years when the sales were the biggest of all. *Captain Marvel* outsold *Superman* and came out every two or three weeks in a dozen different magazines. The quality of the art, as I look at it now, is pretty bad but the stories were always top notch. We always had good stories and from what

I hear from fans and younger people, it's the stories that they enjoy and the stories that they remember. They don't pay any attention to the art at all. It was the story and my belief is that readers only look at the picture out of the corners of their eyes, anyway. After it all collapsed, about '45 when the guys came back looking for jobs and so on, the old comic business went downhill because it had overextended itself. It cut back, a little at a time. They'd kill one title and then another and finally there was just Pete Costanza and myself left doing all our own work except for lettering. And then, there wasn't enough work for Peter, it was just me and the lettering man.

EISNER: They still kept doing *Captain Marvel*? It was all *Captain Marvel* then?

BECK: Yes, and the Marvel Family, Marvel Junior and Mary Marvel and the various one-shots and so on; Bullet Man and the crossovers back and forth. Pete and I could do those all ourselves, and the quality was much better. We got on pretty well for five years.

EISNER: Wasn't there a lawsuit between *Captain Marvel* and *Superman*?

BECK: Yah, DC sued.

EISNER: DC sued Fawcett for coming out with what they considered an imitation. Let's get into that a little bit because what *Captain Marvel* did and what *Superman* did has set in motion a whole heroic form in comics, which of course has lasted over 45 years and continues today. What was produced then was very important because it really was during that period that the costumed superhero comic character came into being...or was established.

BECK: It had been in existence before, as was pointed out in the suit and in various editorials that fandom has run. *Tarzan* was running long before *Superman* was. *Popeye* did all the things that *Superman* did. If you go back to the old westerns and Ned Buntline and...

EISNER: But they weren't costumed superheroes in the sense of a super-structured man impervious to...

BECK: Oh, yes! Paul Bunyan and all those characters were the same thing: great, big, huge guys who could do all kinds of tremendous feats. And of course, Buffalo Bill and all those old western characters...

EISNER: So, when you were working on comics you were thinking that you were working in that genre?

BECK: Yes, the Phantom has been around for years. He wore a costume.

EISNER: So as far as you and Parker were concerned, you were contributing to a literary genre that had been well established...albeit in comic book format...right?

BECK: We had the standard setup. We had the detective. Detectives have been around since the days of old and we had a newspaper reporter and a freelance sai-



lor who sailed around in a big yacht and a magician and a western once called Golden Arrow, raised by an old prospector, could ride bareback and all that stuff. They were all based on this stuff that had been going on for hundreds of years. DC operated on the basis of an old Roman emperor who was walking through a field of wheat one day when one of his retainers said, "Emperor, how do you manage to maintain your position of power?" He took his cane and lopped off the head of a stalk of wheat that was sticking up a few inches higher than the rest. He said, "By getting rid of anybody that pops up too high." That was the basis DC went on. Destroy anybody that was possibly any kind of competition.

EISNER: As far as I recall, in those days all comic book publishers were fighting for position. The attempt was to protect themselves from being cut into, so to speak. Newsstand display space was becoming harder to come by. There were a lot of publishers. Newsstands and candy stores were the only outlets then.

BECK: You know what their claim was? Their claim was that *Captain Marvel* was so much like *Superman* that the poor little kids were buying it by mistake, thinking it was *Superman*. That all the money that Fawcett made rightfully belonged to DC. [chuckle] They wouldn't admit that kids were buying it because they preferred it. That they thought it was better.

EISNER: Well, that's generally the basis for suits, you know. It works on two levels: First, did you violate a copyright? Second, how much was the damage? I'm no lawyer, but I've had some experience with it. The issue usually gets down to how much damage did plagiarism (if it was that), do? Now let me jump back again to what it is you were doing, or what you thought you were doing. Within a year after the beginning of *Captain Marvel*, you were no longer composing panels but rather organizing or monitoring what was being done and putting on the heads and keeping control of the characters. Then you went back to doing the whole thing yourself. What I'm trying to lead us into is a discussion of how we see this medium. I guess I have what some people call a pretentious view of the medium we work in. I regard it as a kind of literary form. A language composed of text (words), and visuals (imagery) that's gradually becoming more and more recognized as valid. I call it sequential art, for want of a better word.

BECK: It's the same form I've used when I've done things for photographers. It's the same as a story board before they produce a movie. It's in all forms of advertising. A guy sits there and lays out the ads in sequence so they don't contradict each other. It's months before they ever appear. It's only that word "comic" connected with it that turns people against it.

EISNER: Do you think that this sequential art form has growth potential? If so,



The old man of the shop, 32-year-old C. C. Beck (standing), discusses a cover for *Whiz Comics* with W.H. Fawcett Jr.

where do you think it might go as a form of expression.

BECK: It's just going to take its place alongside all the others such as painting and cake decorating.

EISNER: Oh, you think it's a decorative art rather than a communication art?

BECK: Well, communication...all those cave paintings they think had a kind of religious significance.

EISNER: Well, there's an argument about that. I happen to believe they were communications. They were reporters, if you will. A guy came in from the field and said this is how I killed that mastodon yesterday or this is how I did whatever.

BECK: All the Egyptian stuff is pure cartoon. They had balloons, cartouches...

EISNER: That's right, it became a language. This is what I'm driving at! Do you think that something more than what we're doing now or what's being done with it can be attempted? More in the sense of depth of sophistication?

BECK: Not consciously, no.

EISNER: In other words, you feel the state of the art, as we know it now, had reached a kind of zenith?

BECK: Well, I'd like to bring this up somewhere along the line, that the comic books themselves are already in the rococo or baroque school where the art has overpowered the story value, the thought, that is. The script, like Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant*. I met Foster once, after he retired. The hardest problem, he said, was getting stories to put his illustrations to. In the same way, Hogarth, who drew *Tarzan* in the forties, said the hardest thing was to get good stories. As movie makers and everybody knows, you've got to get a good story. The men that are doing the work today, Gil Kane and so on, are

much better artists than you and I put together. They're good illustrators and they're not getting good stories. Everytime I meet Gil Kane he moans to me about how rotten the stories are.

EISNER: Well, do you think any of those guys ought to get in and write their own? Don't you think they're capable of writing their own?

BECK: Well, not and drawing them too. There just isn't time. A writer might take a couple of years to write a book and you just can't take a couple of years.

EISNER: In the world of comic books...

BECK: You're lucky if you get three days. EISNER: I see.

BECK: Now, what Williamson and Kane and so on have been doing with the *Star Wars* and various forms of that, those are good stories. I don't know the scripts; I haven't read any of them, but if they're just telling the story of *Star Wars* movie, it is a good story. It's proved it. Then as they start the sequels to it, the stories get worse and worse and they say cover it up with good artwork instead. You can't cover up the lack of a story with good artwork.

EISNER: Well, I think what's been happening is the publishers have been responding to the audience with what I like to call sensory experience, visual trips, that concentrate on highly involved, *beautiful* art. There are some enormous examples currently—have you seen the European stuff? The work produced in France and Spain? It is actually incredible art. These men would have been gallery artists and great book illustrators a half century ago. They are in the mold of old masters, master illustrators.

BECK: Have you ever seen one of these movies that go all the way around you? 23

# THE FIRST TEAM

## TITLES

AMERICAN FLAGG  
E-MAN  
MARS  
JON SABLE  
FREELANCE  
STARSLAYER  
WARP

## WRITERS

Mike W. Barr  
Howard Chaykin  
Peter Gillis  
Mike Grell  
Jack C. Harris  
Marc Hempel  
Paul Kupperberg  
John Ostrander  
Martin Pasko  
Mark Wheatley

## LETTERERS

Ken Bruzenak  
Janice Chiang  
Peter Iro  
Bruce Patterson  
Bill Spicer  
John Workman

## ARTISTS

Frank Brunner  
Rick Burchett  
Howard Chaykin  
Lenin Delsol  
Steve Ditko  
George Freeman  
Mike Grell  
Mike Gustovich  
Marc Hempel  
Bruce Patterson  
Doug Rice  
Mark Silvestri  
Bob Smith  
Joe Staton  
Timothy Truman  
Bill Willingham  
Mark Wheatley

## STAFF

Joe Staton, Art Director  
Rick Oliver, Associate Editor  
Bruce Patterson, Production Coordinator  
Doug Rice, Production Assistant  
Jim Layer, Production Assistant  
Kathy Kotsivas, Office Manager  
Ivy Graham, Secretary

## COLORISTS

Janice Cohen  
Wendy Fiore  
Bruce Patterson  
Lynn Varley

## SPECIAL APPEARANCES

Mike Baron  
Terry Beatty  
Richard Bruning  
John Byrne  
Max Collins  
Phil Foglio  
Fred Hembeck  
Don Lomax  
Francis Mao  
Lee Marrs  
Joshua Quagmire  
Steve Rude  
Reed Waller

All the talented professionals above have contributed to the success of First Comics during our initial year. We gratefully acknowledge their support and continuing contributions.

Mike Gold,  
Managing Editor

Richard Felber,  
Business Manager

Rick Obadiah,  
Publisher

**FIRST**  
COMICS<sup>TM</sup>  
COUNT ON US!



WEEKLY  
COMIC  
BOOK

RECORD  
PHILADELPHIA

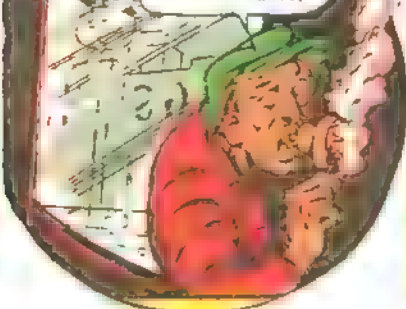
3 COMPLETE  
STORIES

SUNDAY, JULY 7, 1940



SOMEWHERE IN NEW YORK CITY

HULLO COMMISSIONER DOLAN?  
D'S IS FINKY, DA STOOL . Lissen,  
GOT A HOT TIP! SOMETHIN'  
DAT'LL MAKE MURDER AN'  
ROBBERY SEEM LIKE KINNEGARTEN  
GAMES.. I'M CALLIN' FROM A  
PAY BOOTH . YEAH, I'LL BE  
RIGHT OVER..

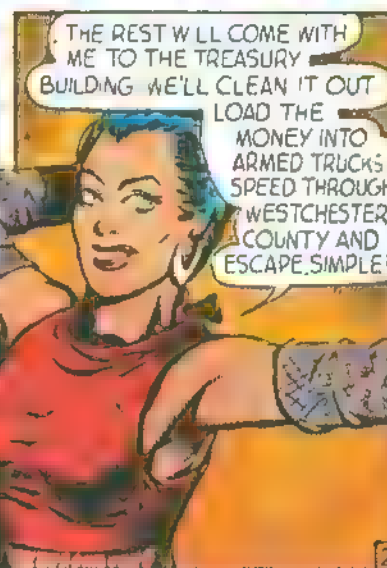
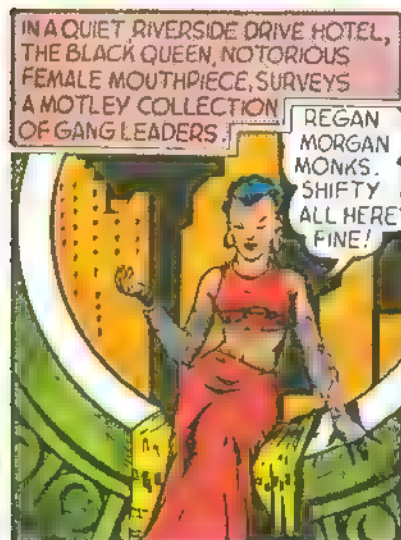
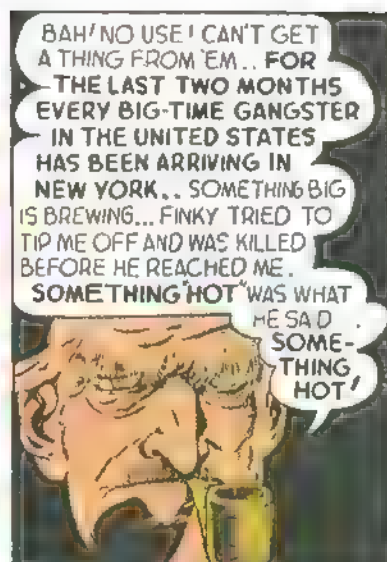


AS FINKY STEPS FROM THE STORE  
A CAR SWERVES AROUND THE  
CORNER... FROM ITS WINDOWS  
POORS A HAIL OF LEADEN DEATH

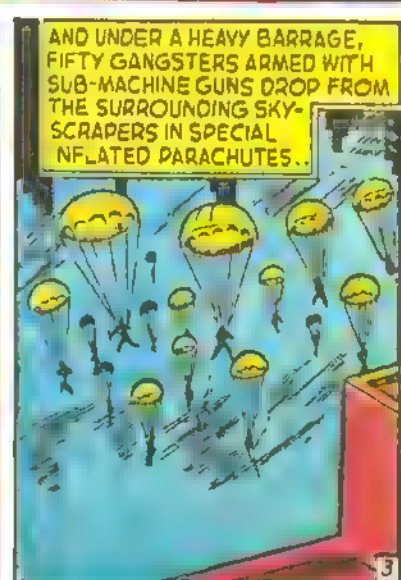
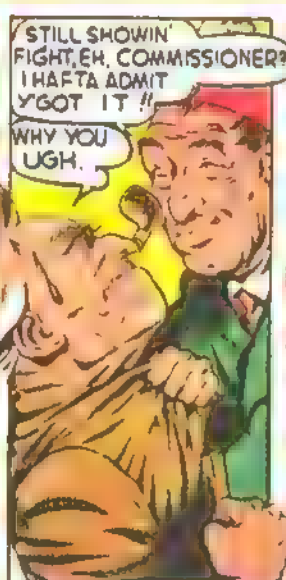
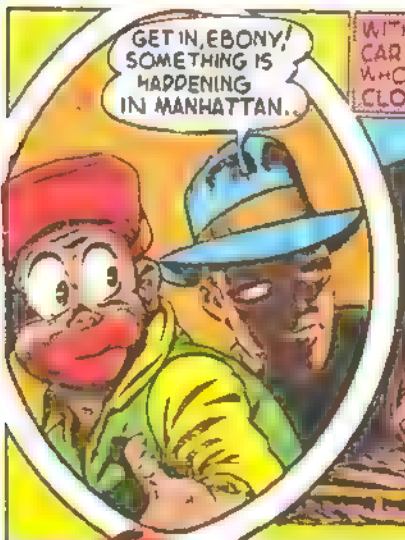
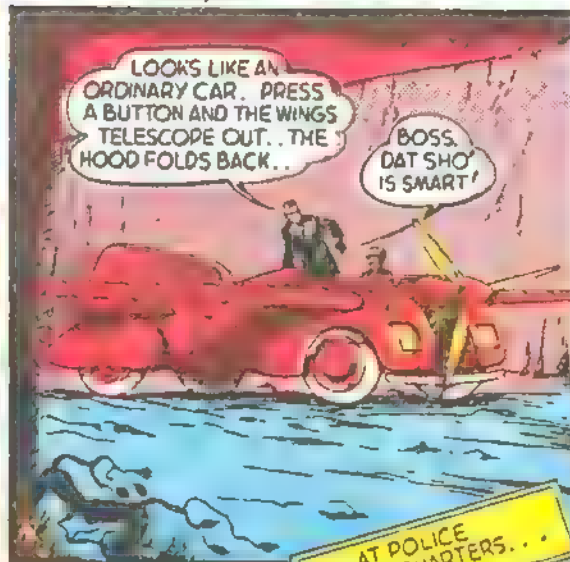


AND WITH THE SUDDENNESS OF ITS  
APPEARANCE, THE MURDER CAR  
CAREENS OFF, LEAVING ONLY THE  
TWITCHING BODY OF FINKY THE  
STOOL, HUDDLED IN  
THE GUTTER...









PLUCKY GUARDS OPEN UP FROM THE SUB-TREASURY ROOF WITH ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE...



A FEW SCREAMING GANGSTERS GO DOWN IN FLAMES.



BUT MOST OF THEM LAND ON THE ROOF AND CAPTURE THE BUILDING.



GET THE NITRO-GLYCERIN AND WORK ON THOSE VAULTS... WE'VE ONLY A FEW HOURS!

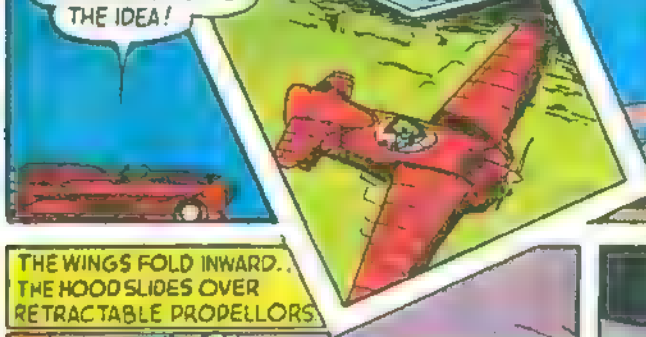


MEANWHILE, THE SPIRIT RACES TOWARD NEW YORK

STOP! OR WE'LL BLAST YA!

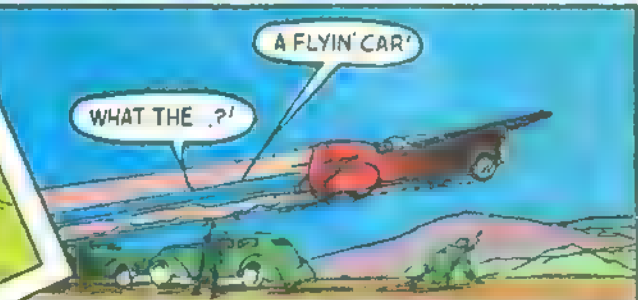
GANGSTERS BLOCKING THE HIGHWAY... I'M BEGINNING TO GET THE IDEA!

THE CAR SUDDENLY SPROUTS WINGS



A FLYIN' CAR!

WHAT THE...?!



THE WINGS FOLD INWARD... THE HOOD SLIDES OVER RETRACTABLE PROPELLORS



NEXT STOP, NEW YORK!



HELLO...DIS IS UNIT 2 CALLIN' THE BLACK QUEEN. EVERYTHINGS O.K. DOWN HERE AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS. RIGHT

LISSEN, PIKER/I'M GETTIN' SCARED!

YEH! LET'S PULL OUT! ONLY A HUNDRED O'US GUARDIN' THOSE COPS!

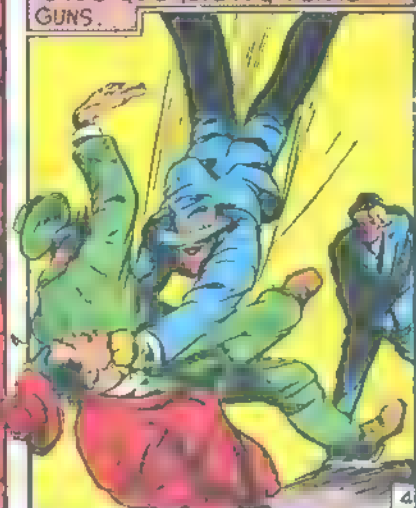


SUDDENLY A TALL FIGURE STANDS IN A WINDOW

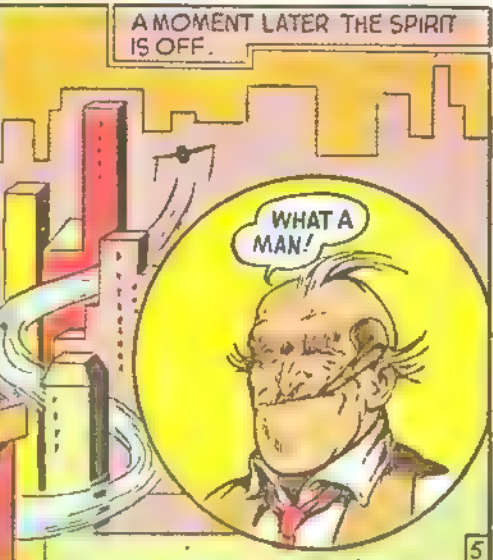
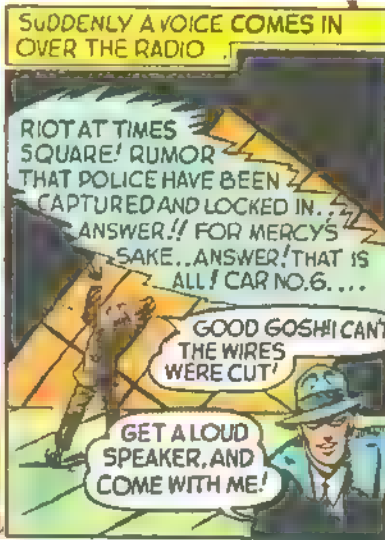
THE SPIRIT!! SHOOT!



BUT THE DAREDEVIL CRIME FIGHTER IS TOO QUICK, EVEN FOR GANG GUNS.







NOW, PUNK! SPILL IT... WHO'S RUNNING THIS SHOW?

B-BLACK QUEEN... DON'T HIT ME AGAIN... THE COMMISSIONER IS IN D'NEXT ROOM!

DOWN THE SILENT CORRIDORS SPRINTS THE SPIRIT...

THE SPIRIT!

GOT TO HAND IT TO THE BLACK QUEEN... SHE SURE CAN THINK UP SUPER CR MES!

DOLAN!

BOY! I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU!

SUDDENLY A VOICE COMES IN OVER THE RADIO

RIOT AT TIMES SQUARE! RUMOR THAT POLICE HAVE BEEN CAPTURED AND LOCKED IN. ANSWER!! FOR MERCY'S SAKE... ANSWER! THAT IS ALL! CAR NO. 6...

GOOD GOSH! I CANT! THE WIRES WERE CUT!

GET A LOUD SPEAKER, AND COME WITH ME!

WITH ITS THREE PASSENGERS THE SPIRIT'S WINGED AUTO ZOOMS THROUGH THE HEAVY TRAFFIC...

AND SPROUTING ITS WINGS, CIRCLES ABOVE THE MILLING THROG

THE RUMOR IS FALSE... GO HOME!

ON THE ROOF OF THE TIMES BUILDING...

I'LL DROP YOU HERE, DOLAN/EBONY AND I WILL GET THE BLACK QUEEN!

A MOMENT LATER THE SPIRIT IS OFF.

WHAT A MAN!

IN THE WADTS OF THE SUB TREASURY

I THOUGHT I COULD CRACK A SAFE! BUT BOY THESE ARE TOUGH BABIES!

SO WILL THE POLICE BE, WHEN THEY GET YOU!

SPIRIT!

BUT BLACK QUEEN IS NOT TO BE CAUGHT.. SHE HURLS A GAS BOMB AT THE SPIRIT

SO LONG, SPIRIT!

COME ON, BOYS.. WE'VE GOT TO REACH MY YACHT IN THE HARBOR! ONCE OUT TO SEA WE'VE GOT A CHANCE ...

BUT THIRTY FEET ABOVE THEM, VEERING LIKE A BAT BETWEEN THE BUILDINGS, FOLLOWS THE SPIRIT, HIS HEADLIGHTS PICKING OUT THE GANGSTERS

GOOD GOSH! THEY'RE RUNNING DOWN THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN! TAKE THE CONTROLS, EBONY!

WITH THE EASE OF A SKILLED ACROBAT THE SPIRIT CLIMBS ACROSS THE WING AND DROPS ONTO THE ROOF.

HELLO, PIKER! TAKE THIS!

BOSS, Y' DONE MISSED THE QUEEN.. SHE'S GOT AWAY!

THE BLACK QUEEN MANAGES TO REACH HER YACHT, AND IS SPEEDING DOWN THE HARBOR.

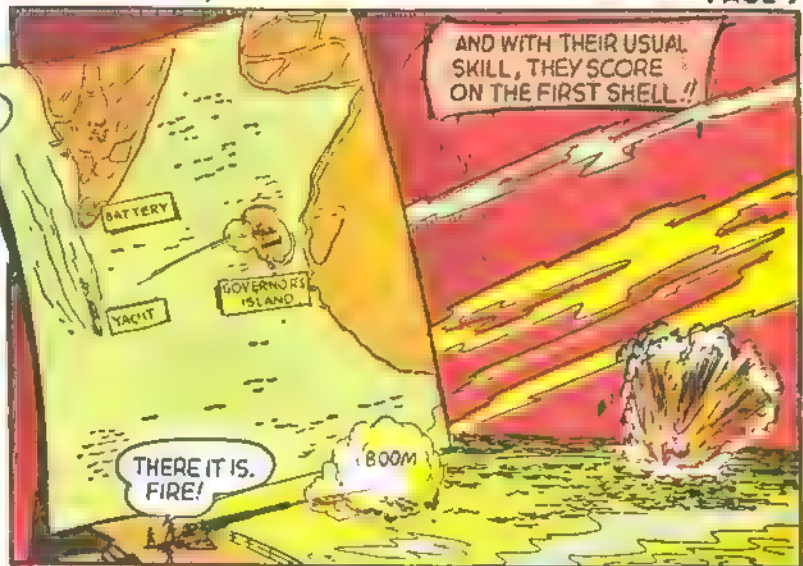
.. WITH THE DRIVER UNCONSCIOUS, THE CAR SWERVES AND CRASHES .....

AS THE SPIRIT CLIMBS TO SAFETY AGAIN.

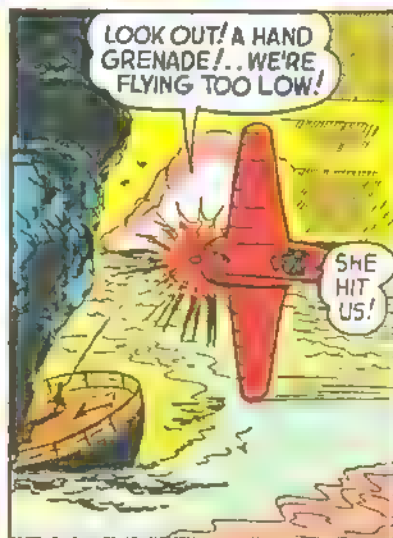
THERE SHE GOES. WE CAN'T STOP HER NOW!

UGH!

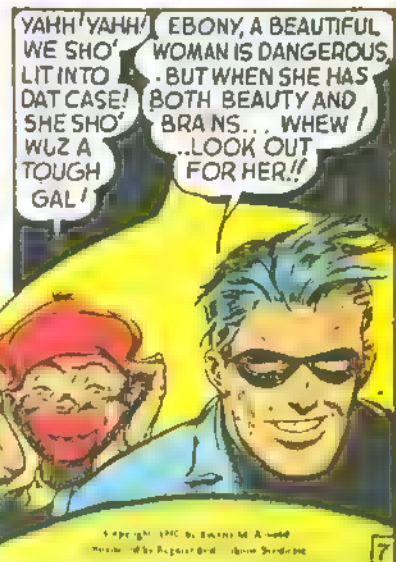
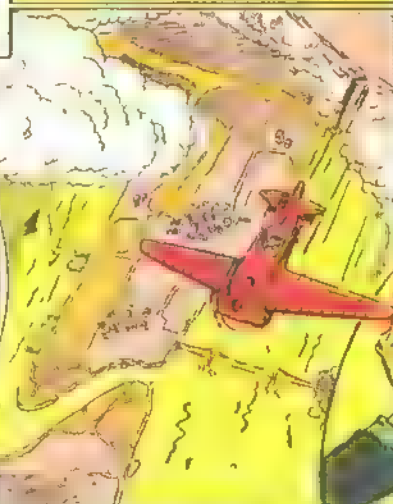




AS THE LAST RAYS OF THE SETTING SUN FILTER THROUGH THE SMOKE OF THE SINKING SHIP, THE BLACK QUEEN TURNS FLAMING EYES SKYWARD AS THE SPIRIT CIRCLES OVERHEAD...

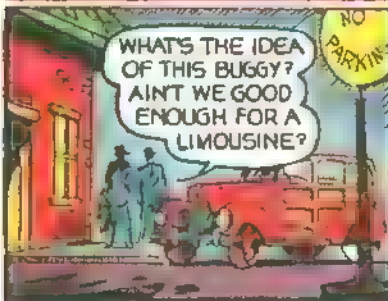


AND HIGH OVER MANHATTAN THE SPIRIT WINGS HOMEWARD.....





CHIEF HARDY MOORE AND OFFICER FEENY O'MYE ARRIVE AT BLUEPORT, A FASHIONABLE SUMMER RESORT, TO SOLVE A JEWEL ROBBERY.



THAT'S A STATION WAGON, STUPID! YOU HAVEN'T LIVED TILL YOU'VE RIDDEN IN ONE!



HERE, MY GOOD MAN, AND SEE THAT YOU HANDLE IT WITH CARE!



AND I'LL DO ALL THE TALKING... YOU KEEP QUIET AND TRY TO LOOK SMART. MRS. DE GRAND IS A CULTURED SOCIETY MATRON!



AT THE MAGNIFICENT ESTATE, THEY ARE GREETED BY THEIR WEALTHY HOSTESS.



HOW DO YOU DO? I FEEL SO RELIEVED NOW THAT YOU'VE ARRIVED!



WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE TROUBLE, MADAM?



AMONG OTHERS IN BLUEPORT, I HAVE BEEN VICTIM TO SEVERAL JEWEL THEFTS YOU SEE.



DUNNO. LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE GETTING CARELESS AT THE ZOO!



HAVENT I SEEN YOU SOME PLACE BEFORE MISS?



UH FEENY'S TH' NAME CAPT..ER. SERGEANT FEENY O'MYE.



CHAWMED. I'D BE DELIGHTED IF YOU'D COME TO MY SWIMMING PARTY TONIGHT. MR. O'MYE





THAT NIGHT, THE SINCLAIR'S POOL IS CRISSCROSSED WITH FLOOD LIGHTS. THE SELECT OF BLUE-PORT GATHERS FOR A MIDNIGHT DIP...



IN THE SHADOWS A LOVELY SWIMMER STANDS ALONE. BRENDA BANKS, TRUANT FROM SOCIETY... ALOOF AND READY FOR ACTION AS THE MYSTERIOUS LADY LUCK.



HM. SO HAND-SOME HARDY HAS BEEN INVITED TOO! SOMETHING IS ABOUT TO POP!

FEENEY IS WASTING NO TIME WITH THE CAPTIVATING MARGO.

AW, THAT WAS ONLY SMALL STUFF YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN! ME WHEN I NABBED RAPONE! HE WAS A TOUGH EGG... ER.. FELLOW!



YOU'RE WONDERFUL!

SUDDENLY...



MY DIAMOND NECKLACE IS GONE!

WHAT?!



SOMEONE JUST SLIPPED BY ME AND... THERE HE GOES NOW, ACROSS THE LAWN!

HARDY SPEEDS AFTER THE DARK FIGURE AS IT DARTS INTO THE SHADOWS OF THE HOUSE.

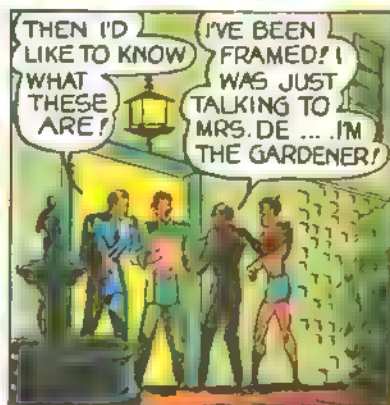


GOTTA LEARN TO RUN FASTER IF YOU TAKE CHANCES LIKE THAT!



NOW, I'LL TAKE THE DIAMONDS!

B-BUT.. I DON'T HAVE THEM!



THEN I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THESE ARE!

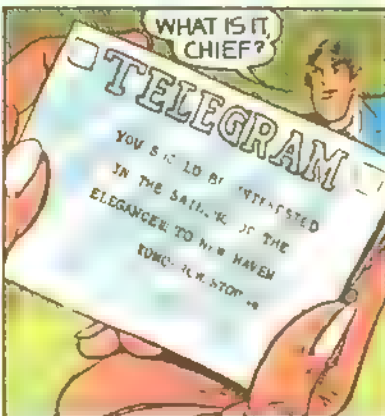
I'VE BEEN FRAMED! I WAS JUST TALKING TO MRS. DE... I'M THE GARDENER!

AFTER SEVERAL HOURS THE MAN WILL NOT CONFESS TO THE ROBBERY.



MAYBE HE'S NOT LYING BUT

TELEGRAM FOR CHIEF MOORE!



WHAT IS IT, CHIEF?

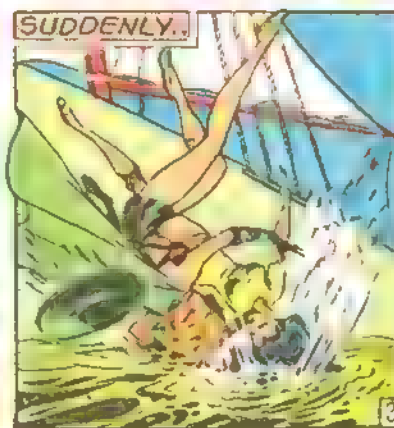
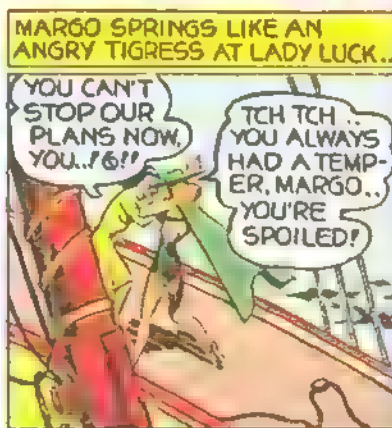
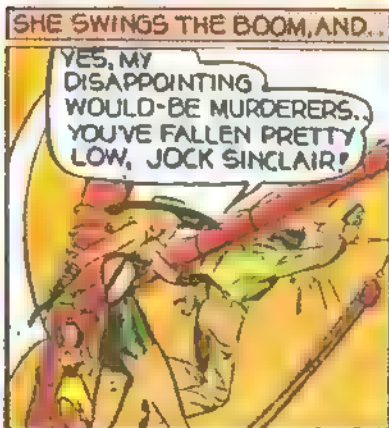
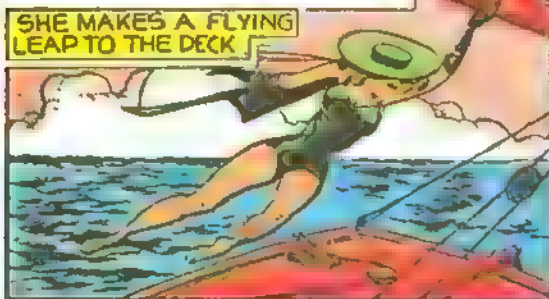
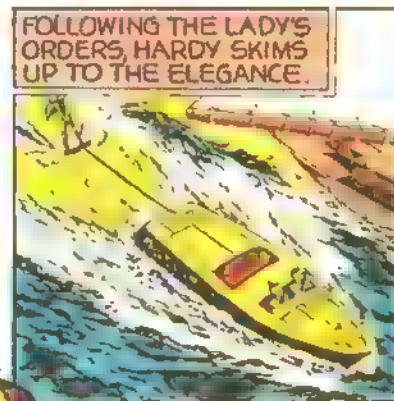
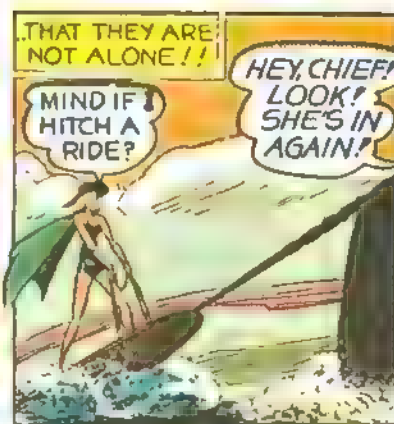
TELEGRAM

YOU WILL BE INTERESTED IN THE SAILING OF THE ELEGANCE TO NEW HAVEN TOMORROW STOP

NEXT MORNING

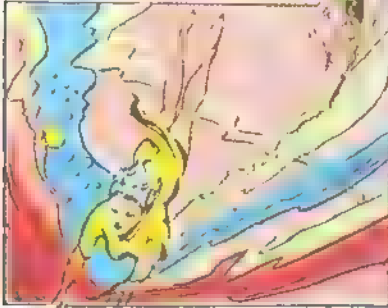


THE ELEGANCE III? WHY THAT'S THE SINCLAIR SLOOP! MUST HAVE BEEN A CRANK THAT TIPPED US OFF!





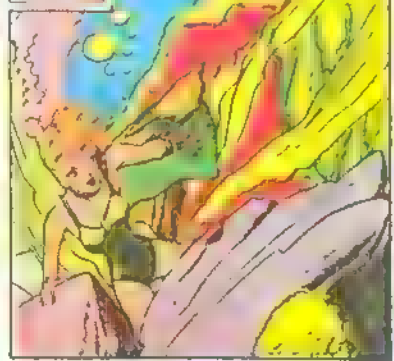
MARGO LEADS THE LADY ON A SWIFT CHASE, BELOW THE WATERS OF THE SOUND.



A JAGGED ROCK CATCHES THE TRAILING CLOAK.



LADY LUCK IS UNABLE TO MOVE.



JOCK AND MARGO ARE PICKED UP BY HARDY



ARE YOU HURT, MISS SINCLAIR?

I WANT YOU TO ARREST THAT WOMAN, CHIEF!

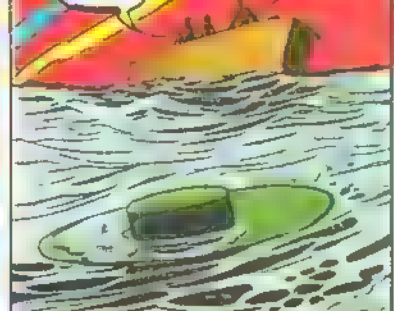
SHE ASSAULTED US FOR NO REASON AT ALL!

SHE'S RAVING MAD!



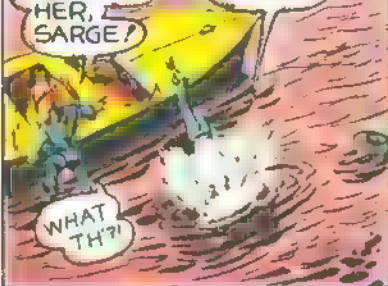
BY THE WAY, WHERE IS SHE?

STILL UNDER!!



BETTER HELP HIM LOOK FOR HER, SARGE!

SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HER!



WHAT TH?

HURRY, JOCK! WE CAN STILL MAKE NEW HAVEN IN TIME TO SELL THE STUFF!

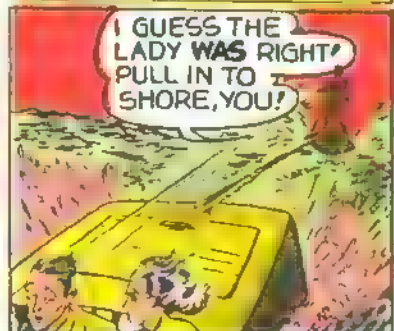


HEY!

MAKIN' A GETAWAY, HUH? WELL... OOPS!



AT LAST, FEENY STRAIGHTENS UP AND WHIPS OUT HIS GUN



I GUESS THE LADY WAS RIGHT! PULL IN TO SHORE, YOU!

FRIGHTENED BY FEENY'S SHOTS, THE SINCLAIRS DRAW UP TO A SMALL DOCK.



THOUGHT THEY COULD MAKE A MONKEY OUT OF ME, DID THEY?

III THAT NIGHT ON THE ELEGANCE




BUT, I DON'T CARE WHICH SIDE OF THE LAW YOU'RE REALLY ON. I JUST KNOW THAT IF I HADN'T SAVED YOU... I'D...

HEY, CHIEF! WHERE YA BEEN? I FOUND THE JEWELS ON THOSE TWO... GOT 'EM LOCKED UP. HEY! DID YOU HEAR ME?

BUT, HARDY DEAR, I HAVE TO FIGHT MY BATTLES ALONE!

DON'T MISS LADY LUCK'S THRILLING ADVENTURE NEXT WEEK!



# MR MYSTIC

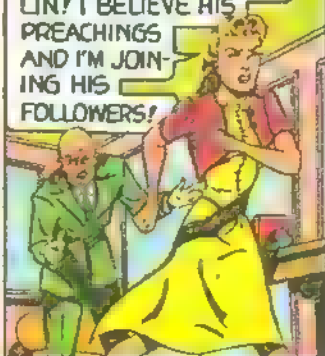
By  
W. MORGAN  
THOMAS

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BENDOWED WITH STRANGE SUPERNATURAL POWERS BY A MYSTERIOUS GROUP OF LAMAS, MR. MYSTIC, A YOUNG AMERICAN DIPLOMAT, DEDICATES HIS LIFE TO AN AVID FIGHT AGAINST EVIL.

IN A WORLD OF UNREST, MANY FANTASTIC CULTS AND RELIGIONS MUSHROOM OUT. SOME BAD, SOME GOOD. AMONG THEM IS THE LIN TEMPLE, WHOSE DISCIPLES VANISH MYSTERIOUSLY

I'M TIRED OF YOUR RIDICULING THE MAMSA LIN! I BELIEVE HIS PREACHINGS AND I'M JOINING HIS FOLLOWERS!

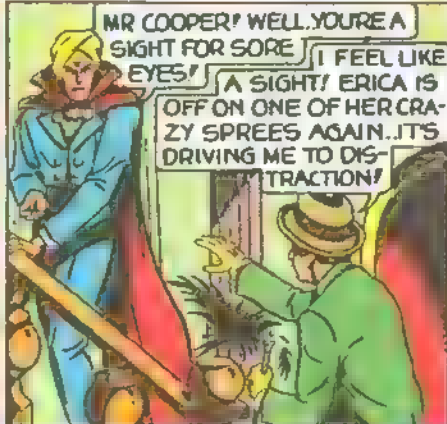


I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING... MR. MYSTIC! HE'S MY ANSWER! IF ANYONE CAN EXPOSE THIS FAKE, HE CAN!



AN HOUR LATER

MR COOPER! WELL, YOU'RE A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES! I FEEL LIKE A SIGHT! ERICA IS OFF ON ONE OF HER CRAZY SPREES AGAIN. IT'S DRIVING ME TO DISTRACTION!



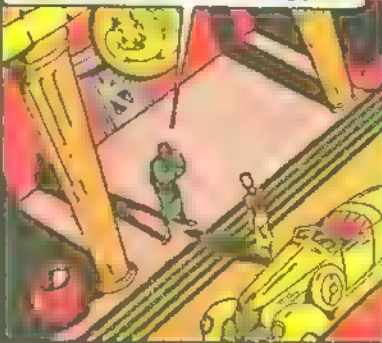
SHE'S GOTTEN MIXED UP WITH A RELIGIOUS FANATIC WHO CLAIMS THAT ANYONE WHO FOLLOWS HIM WILL DWELL IN EARTHLY PARADISE. HE'S A CLEVER ONE! I WANT YOU TO EXPOSE HIM AND BRING ERICA TO HER SENSES!

I'LL GO AT ONCE!



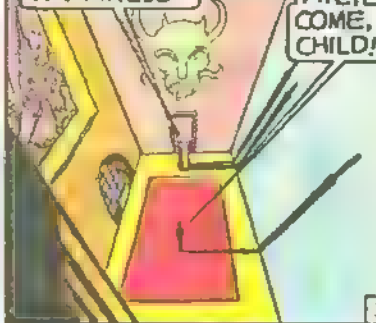
MEANWHILE, ERICA COOPER IS GREETED BY MAMSA LIN. . .

AH! YOUR DAY OF DAYS IS AT HAND! THE REPRESENTATIVE FROM PARADISE IS HERE TO TAKE YOU WITH HIM! COME!

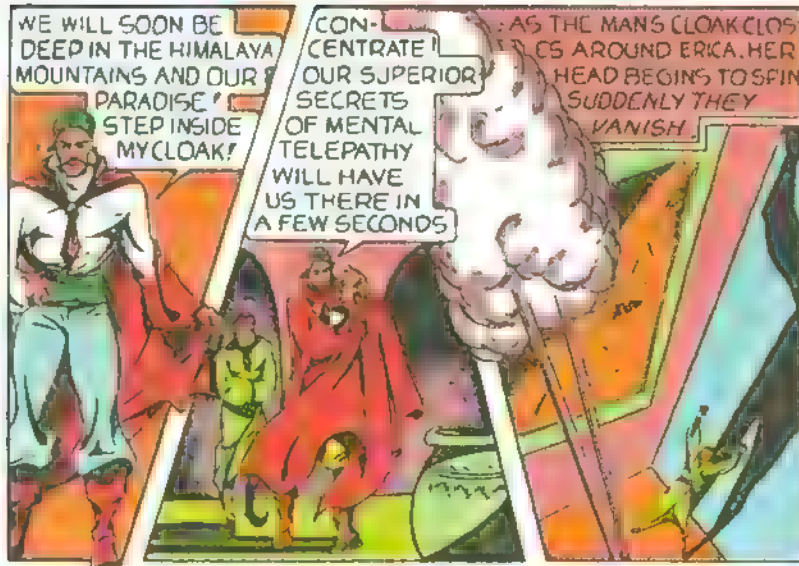


HERE IS THE NEWEST CANDIDATE, OH BROTHER! TAKE HER WITH YOU TO THE LAND OF ETERNAL HAPPINESS!

AYE, COME, CHILD!







WE WILL SOON BE DEEP IN THE HIMALAYA MOUNTAINS AND OUR PARADISE! STEP INSIDE MY CLOAK!

CONCENTRATE! OUR SUPERIOR SECRETS OF MENTAL TELEPATHY WILL HAVE US THERE IN A FEW SECONDS

AS THE MAN'S CLOAK CLOS- CS AROUND ERICA, HER HEAD BEGINS TO SPIN. SUDDENLY THEY VANISH

OUTSIDE. MR MYSTIC CLIMBS THE STEPS OF THE TEMPLE AND NEARS THE BOLTED DOOR

WHERE IS ERICA COOPER, MAMSA LIN? OH! DID I STARTLE YOU? CERTAINLY THE TRICK OF PROJECTING ONE'S SELF IS NOT UNKNOWN TO YOU?



OF COURSE NOT! I USE IT OFTEN AS FOR ERICA COOPER, I DONT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HER!

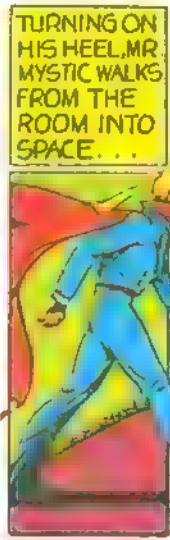


I HAVE NO TIME TO WASTE ON YOU..THISLL MAKE YOU TALK!



THEY'VE GONE BY THOUGHT WAVES TO OUR TEMPLE. PLEASE! DON'T MELT ME COMPLETELY!

ILL FREE YOU WHEN I RETURN!



TURNING ON HIS HEEL, MR MYSTIC WALKS FROM THE ROOM INTO SPACE...



SECONDS LATER HE AGAIN MATERIALIZES ATOP A HIGH MOUNTAIN. THE PARADISE OF LIN IS INSIDE

BEFORE THE GATES OF THE CITY, ERICA IS PRESENTED TO THE CULT'S RULER, GANGA LIN, THE EIGHT FOOT GIANT WHOSE MAG C RIVALS EVEN MR MYSTICS

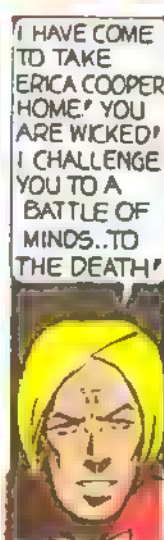


W-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO THAT GRL?

IT IS OUR ANCIENT LAW THAT BEFORE A NEW MEMBER CAN ENTER OUR ETERNAL CITY, A SACRIFICE MUST BE MADE TO MOLLIFY OUR GODS FOR THE EXTRA BURDEN! SO, WE KILL THE SLAVES WE CAPTURE!

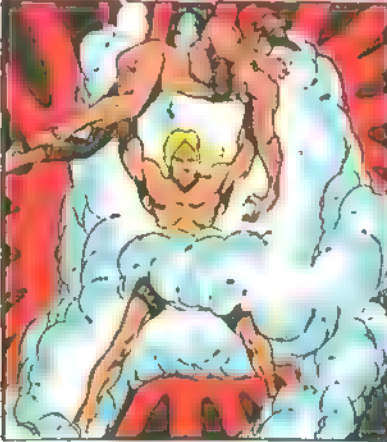


OH! NO! NO! I DON'T WANT TO JOIN NOW!

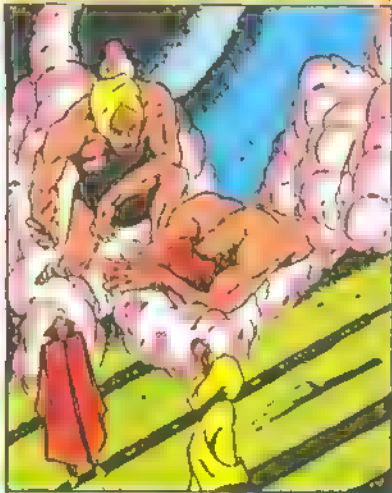




FOR ALMOST AN HOUR THE MEN BATTLE FURIOUSLY. FINALLY GANGA LIN WEAKENS AND MR MYSTIC THROWS HIM OVER...



NEAR EXHAUSTION, MR MYSTIC KNEELS BY HIS FALLEN FOE

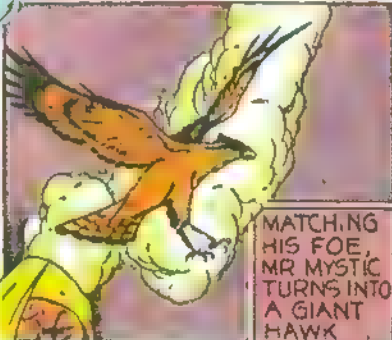


I COMMAND YOU TO SURRENDER! REFUSE, AND I SHALL KILL YOU, GANGA LIN!

I WILL NEVER SURRENDER! NEVER!



TURNING HIMSELF INTO A DEER, GANGA LIN SPEEDS AWAY, DESPERATELY TRYING TO ESCAPE THE BURNING MIND OF MR MYSTIC

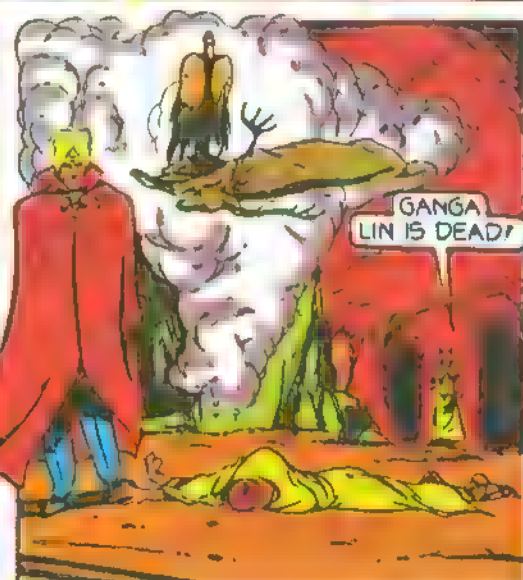
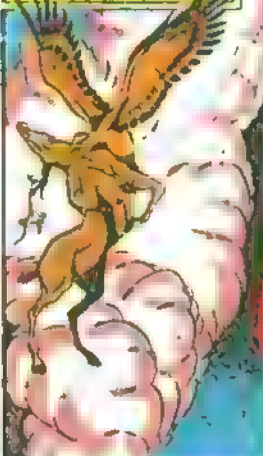


MATCHING HIS FOE, MR MYSTIC TURNS INTO A GIANT HAWK

QUICKLY OVERTAKING THE FLEEING BUCK, THE HAWK DIVES...



WITH A SWIFT MOVEMENT, SHARP CLAWS AND BEAK RIP THE DEER'S NECK



GANGA LIN IS DEAD!

LOOK! THEY'RE COMING AFTER US! WHAT'LL WE DO?





KILL THE INFIDELS!  
THEY CANNOT  
ESCAPE US!  
COME!



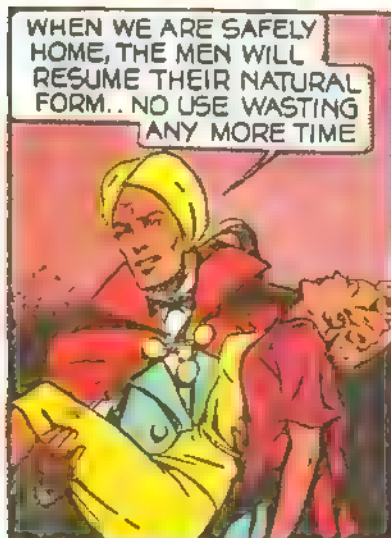
AS THE MEN RUSH  
FORWARD, MR MYSTIC  
GESTURES LAZILY...



IN A FLASH, THEY STAND  
ROOTED TO THE GROUND,  
TURNING INTO  
STALAGMITES!!



ERICAS  
FAINTED!  
GOOD! IT'LL  
BE EASIER  
TAKING HER  
BACK!

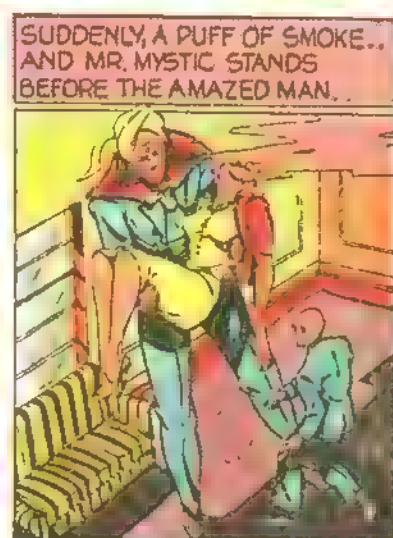


WHEN WE ARE SAFELY  
HOME, THE MEN WILL  
RESUME THEIR NATURAL  
FORM.. NO USE WASTING  
ANY MORE TIME

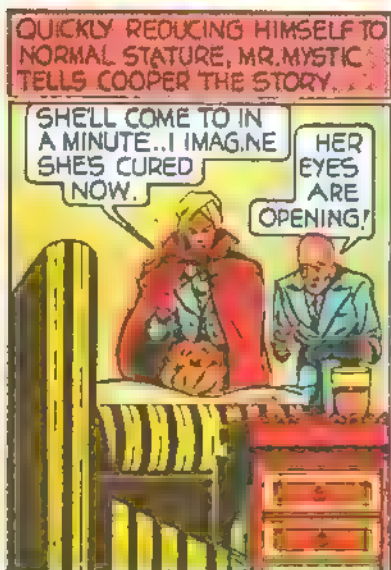


MEANWHILE, ERICAS FATHER  
PACES THE FLOOR RESTLESSLY..

WHERE IN BLAZES CAN  
THEY BE? WHY DOESNT  
HE BRING HER BACK?  
WHY..



SUDDENLY, A PUFF OF SMOKE..  
AND MR. MYSTIC STANDS  
BEFORE THE AMAZED MAN..



QUICKLY REDUCING HIMSELF TO  
NORMAL STATURE, MR. MYSTIC  
TELLS COOPER THE STORY..

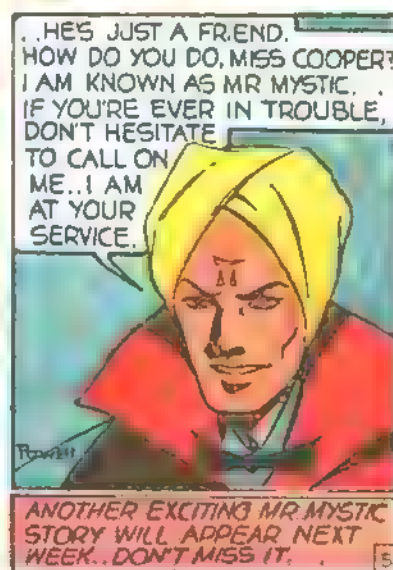
SHE'LL COME TO IN  
A MINUTE.. I IMAGINE  
SHE'S CURED  
NOW.

HER  
EYES  
ARE  
OPENING!



OH! I MUST HAVE FALLEN  
ASLEEP.. I'M SORRY! WHO  
IS THIS STRANGELY  
DRESSED MAN,  
DAD?

DON'T YOU  
KNOW? WHY  
HE?



.. HE'S JUST A FRIEND.  
HOW DO YOU DO, MISS COOPER?  
I AM KNOWN AS MR MYSTIC..  
IF YOU'RE EVER IN TROUBLE,  
DON'T HESITATE  
TO CALL ON  
ME.. I AM  
AT YOUR  
SERVICE.

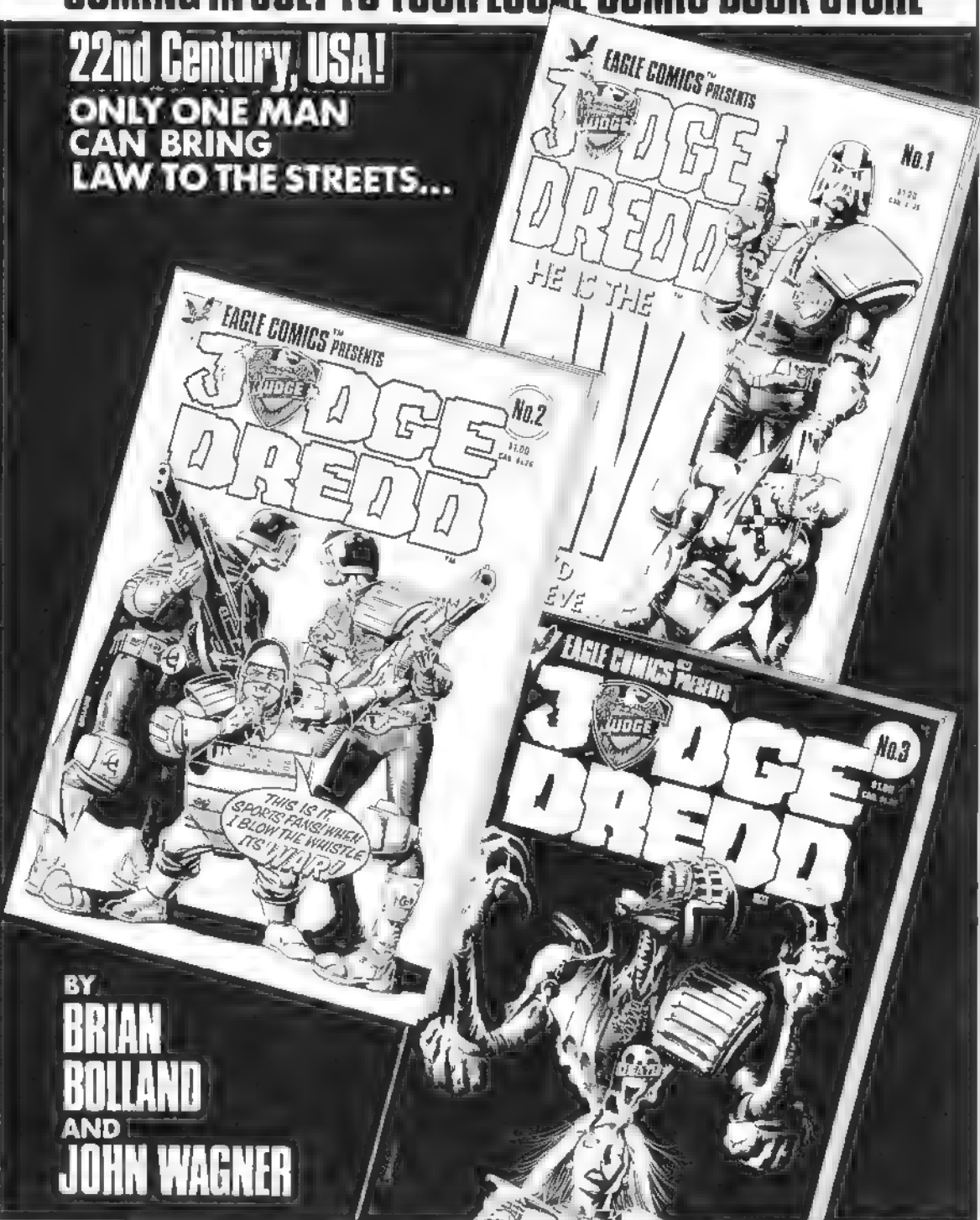
ANOTHER EXCITING MR MYSTIC  
STORY WILL APPEAR NEXT  
WEEK.. DON'T MISS IT.



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CAN BRING  
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**BY  
BRIAN  
BOLLAND  
AND  
JOHN WAGNER**

**32 PAGES-FOUR COLOR-MONTHLY-\$1-MANDO PAPER**

As if you're in an airplane?

EISNER: Yeah, what are they called...

BECK: Circlevision or something. They've made a half dozen or a dozen movies which are just incredible experiences! The airplane banks and everybody hangs on. Now they say they've reached the point that they've got to get a story and some characters in because they can't keep on just giving people boat rides and helicopter rides.

EISNER: Well, that's a classic pattern. First you have interest in the technology for itself alone! Then, the audience, no longer satisfied with the novelty of the phenomenon demands content! The history of motion pictures is a good example of that.

BECK: So now they're going to produce stories with all that illusion of being right in the thing. Eventually they'll work out a way to put dreams right into your head and you'll be the hero and instead of looking at a picture, why...

EISNER: You really think that's going to happen?

BECK: Oh, absolutely, as soon as they work out this way of transferring the things right into your brain. That's what they're working on now. They can get sound into a guy that has no eardrums at all, feed it up through a different nerve.

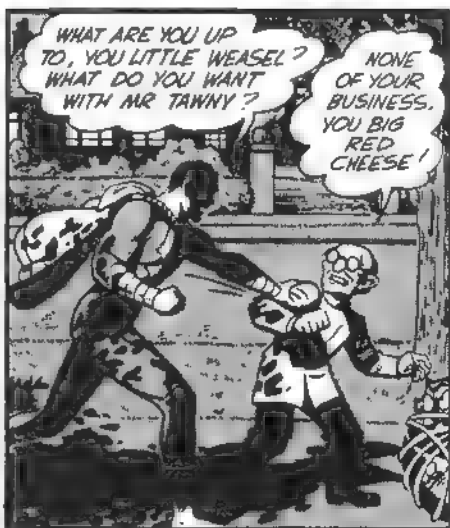
EISNER: Well, let's take a case where an artist is confronted with a script from a very great writer and the script describes, say, a man going down the street feeling desperately low, thinking seriously of committing suicide and he goes to the edge of a bridge, stays there for awhile and has thoughts in terms of going over, and then changes his mind and leaves.... and so forth and so on. He may indicate dialogue...or thought balloons to be placed over the man's head. Now you've got this typewritten script in your hands and you're working on your page. How much contribution, how much writing contribution do you think you would make to that? How much would you consider the artist should make to that? How would you illustrate it? What would you do with it, if you had it in your hand? Would you alter the script....would you feel your job was to serve the author....that is, to faithfully project what was in his mind?

BECK: The same as the director of a movie, you decide who's where and who's facing the audience or the actors or is it a closeup of his nose or is he so far back you can't see him? You decide all that as a director does and then you become the actor himself. If the actor is supposed to be dejected, you put on a dejected face.

Through his whole body, his posture and all, like you do with your stuff, everything.

EISNER: So in other words you think that in the relationship between the comic book artist and the writer, the artist is in effect the motion picture element of a story?

BECK: But, they've proved over and over again, you can get the top directors and



© D.C. Comics

Captain Marvel confronts Sivana in an atypical mood panel.

the top actors and if you don't have a story, like this *Annie* they put on. It was so bad that they say if affected the stage play which was doing fine up till that point. The movie was so bad that they lost sales for the stage play.

EISNER: Well, generally, I prefer the artist and the writer to be one person. Otherwise you're getting the product of two people, the artist-and-the-writer, two different people. Haven't you written for yourself where you've written and drawn at the same time? In the Marvel series have you ever done any of the stories yourself?

BECK: In three stories, as I've mentioned before. They had to be cleared with the editors and O.K.'d and keyed in and all that other stuff.

EISNER: You haven't done comics for some time now, when did you actually stop doing comics?

BECK: My last venture in the field was when I went with DC in '72 or '73.

EISNER: Was that a kind of comeback thing?

BECK: They were glad to see the old original style there but the stories were too silly. A good illustrator that illustrates a bad story makes it look even worse.

EISNER: You couldn't change the story, they wouldn't let you?

BECK: I tried to, yes, and I got approval for all the changes, but they still had no substance to them. Then Nelson Bridwell started writing them. He was an old fan of the original *Captain Marvel* and he did much better, but they weren't paying enough. They were only paying \$65 a page.

EISNER: And that was for penciling and inking?

BECK: And lettering.

EISNER: And lettering!?

BECK: And I said, with all the inflation, I was getting \$50 a page 20 years ago. I should get at least \$100 - \$120 and they said no way, nobody gets that kind of money. So a guy called me just last week and wanted to know if I was interested in get-

ting back in and I said, "\$500 a page and complete control of the scripts!" and that scared him away. But \$500 is about what \$50 was back then.

EISNER: Well, I wanted to get into the question of the theory of treating a story, and breaking it down, designing it and what I call composing, laying out. I'd like to get some of your thoughts on that. Do you have any recollection on either a formula or a reason or a philosophy or an approach that you used that might be worth discussing?

BECK: The basis I go on is never put in a single line that isn't necessary. Don't try to show off because you're an actor and you are the type of actor who hams it up and everything else at the expense of the play. If you've got a good play, that's completely out of place. It's like an old musical. Right at the high spot where something's going to happen the whole chorus comes out and the symphony orchestra starts playing and they sing for a half an hour. I'm more in favor of the old bang, bang western stuff and the *Tarzan* books. Never put in anything that doesn't belong there.

EISNER: Do you think you're dealing here with an entertainment form? That's what you said before. Is that essentially what you feel?

BECK: Conveying a message to the reader in the simplest form, Mort Walker and others use telegraphese. You've got to cut your captions and balloons way down. You have to make every word count.

You don't throw in anything. You cut your backgrounds down to just symbols. In Hal Foster's work, his backgrounds are part of the story. There you want to see a guy going into an ancient Roman town, then you want to see a Roman town, but if he's just passing through Bayonne, New Jersey, there's no reason to show it. Just have him sitting in the train looking out the window is much better. That's the thing, that most young artists are so anxious to show off, all of them, to show the things that they can do, that they throw in a bunch of stuff that doesn't belong there. If you have to stop and figure out a picture for about three minutes, then you've lost the thread of the story.

EISNER: Well, going back to what we said earlier, do you feel the artist then only has a responsibility to narrate the story or to translate the story into pictures rather than make a statement of his own?

BECK: I don't believe in the artist expressing himself at all, any more than an actor who might be a horrible person or a homosexual like Charles Laughton was, but he never did any homosexual movies. When he did movies, nobody knew that he was la dee da. He played big, tough guys. Boris Karloff was actually a very educated, refined Englishman but he always played monsters and villains. This actor who died, he played Clousseau and so on?

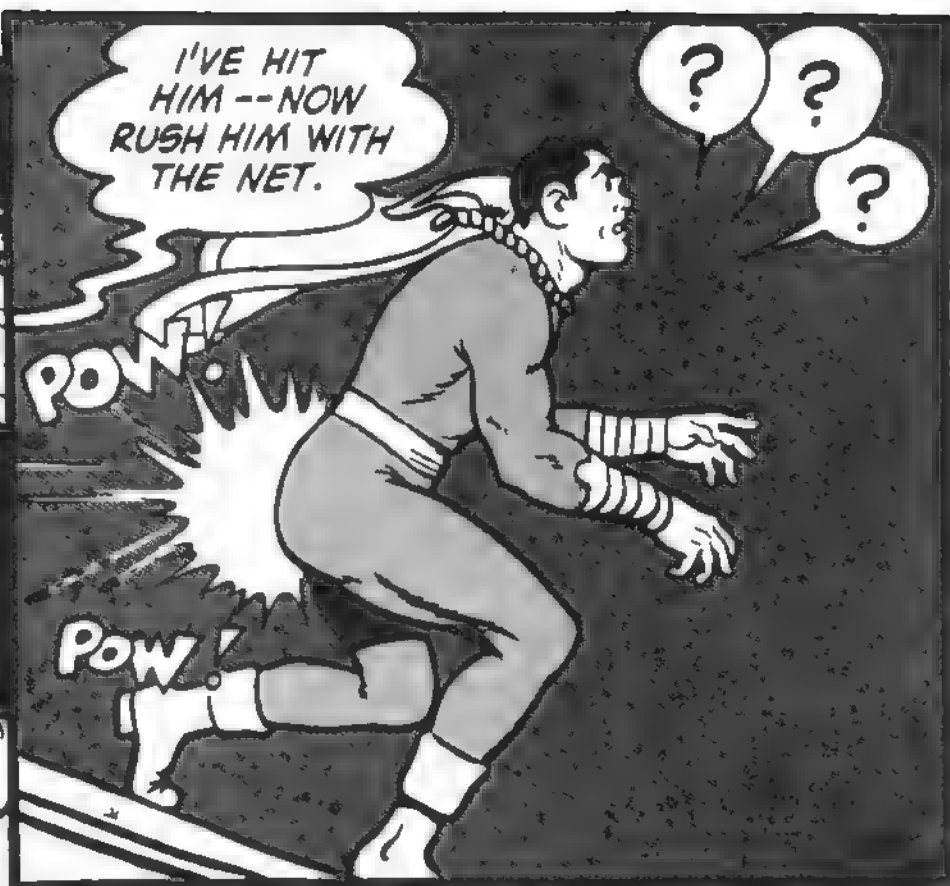
EISNER: Oh....Peter Sellers.

BECK: Yes. He said he had no personality





Captain Marvel dramatically stopped bullets with his chest on comic covers, but inside he stopped lead with other parts of his anatomy.



© DC Comics

of his own at all. Every personality he had was a playwright's creation.

EISNER: So you say that's the artist's function. He's a tool of the writer, if you will.

BECK: An extension of the writer. It might be an old story from the Bible, nobody knows who wrote it but you've got to tell that story.

EISNER: Let's get back to what I asked you earlier, the function of this form or the use of this form. I've been talking about it a lot as a literary form, as a form capable of dealing with much more sophisticated themes than are being dealt with now. How do you feel about that?

BECK: I'm in favor of that.

EISNER: You think it could be done? Because earlier you felt we were at a kind of a zenith, couldn't go beyond that.

BECK: No, I said we had settled into the baroque period where the meaning has gone out of it. If the meaning stays out of it, it's going to die away just like the altar pieces and all the things that Bernini made, statues that are looked on as useless now. All forms of communication, art and everything keep going in waves like that. It gets up to a point where it's so detached from any meaning at all, that all of a sudden the "wild beasts" come in and start it all over again with the cave painting and then finer artists come in and embroiderers and decorators come in and it becomes just a study in textures and so on without any meaning behind it. Now, that has its place in an art gallery

where you just want to see a guy throw textures around. It's actually a handicraft, it's not art anymore.

EISNER: But in this medium, which is a communication medium, you feel that the artist need not elaborate in style and technique?

BECK: Not unless the story calls for it.

EISNER: So he's really working in service to the story?

BECK: And so is the writer. The writers often pad their stuff out with big long complicated things that the editor just throws in the wastebasket.

EISNER: Well, there's a tendency by a lot of illustrators today to overwhelm the story!

BECK: Another thing wrong with the super-hero stuff is they have no variety at all. They never show any young people, dum dums, hicks, or bums or anything like that. The world has all kinds of things in it. The daily newspaper comics give you talking animals, straight detective stories, cartoons, but in the comic books its just one little narrow form with everybody wearing tights running around leaping into the reader's lap.

EISNER: Where do you think it ought to go? If you were an editor in charge and directing a trend for a house, where would you push it?

BECK: Editors of today are trying to get away from that. Roy Thomas, Jim Shooter—they're trying to get back to the original approach of variety and interest and artists like Gil Kane are only too happy to give it

to them, but from what this representative from Marvel said, the distributors don't want it.

EISNER: You are keeping in touch with the medium? Do you see comics at all?

BECK: Not the comic books but I do get *Amazing Heroes* and the other one...

EISNER: Oh, the trade magazines... *The Comics Journal*. So you keep in touch with the field that way.

BECK: I get *The Overpriced Street Guide* [laughter]... course that's mostly on the old stuff. Then there's *The Buyer's Guide* with Cat Yronwode's column about comics and it seems to me that a little life is coming into them again. They were really downhill a few years ago. Everything was monotonously the same... rubber stamps!

EISNER: Well, we've come to the end of our chat. I think you gave me a good insight to how you think and what you've done. Certainly, the years in which you produced *Captain Marvel* were very influential years because they began and were part of the so-called whole Golden Era period. So now, just to conclude, you're working in advertising?

BECK: Just now I'm working on the magazine Bernie McCarty and I are putting out.

EISNER: Yes, called *S.O.B.* is it?

BECK: Yes, and that stack of stuff there is a catalog I've been working on for the better part of a year. I'm really just a commercial illustrator at heart and always have been.

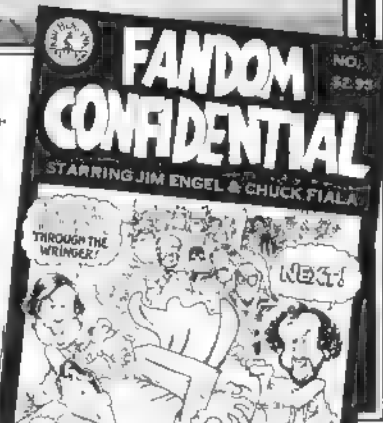


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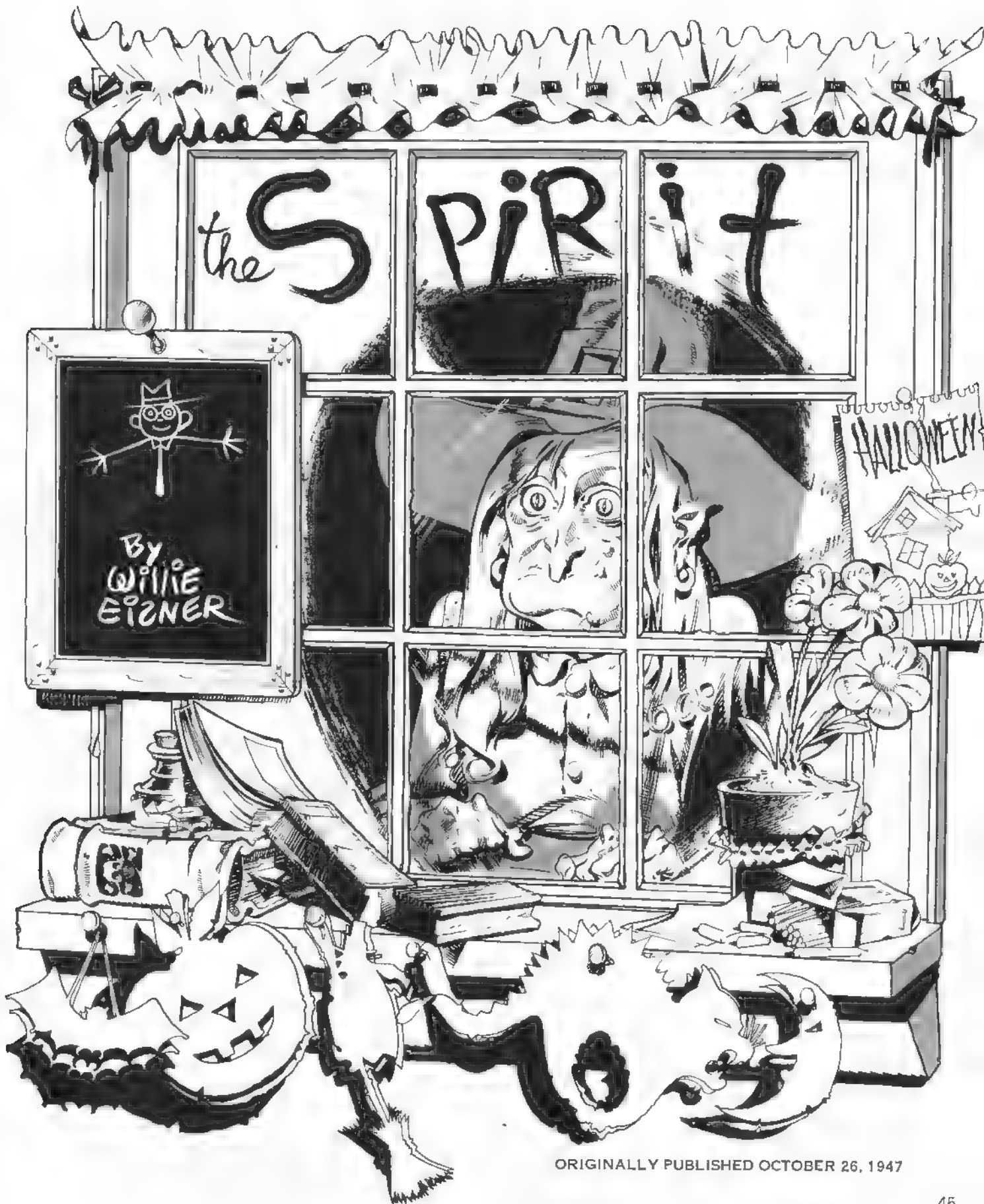
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ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 26, 1947

**I**N THE YEAR 1672 THE COLONY WHERE CENTRAL CITY NOW STANDS WAS THE SCENE OF A BLOODY TRIAL.... A LAW HAD BEEN PASSED FORBIDDING THE PRACTICE OF WITCHCRAFT... SO EXACTLY 35 LOYAL CITIZENS WERE ACCUSED AND PUT TO DEATH FOR THE CRIME...

IT WAS A FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL PURGE... FOR BY 1947 THE **ONLY WITCH** LEFT IN CENTRAL CITY LIVED IN SOLITUDE ON CAULDRON HILL, RIGHT NEAR PUBLIC SCHOOL 43... AND EVEN **SHE** HAD TO DEPEND UPON RAG-PICKING FOR A LIVING...



**BUT**

OCT. 30  
HALLOWEEN

ONCE A YEAR AT THE END OF DAY, ALL THE KIDS WOULD LISTEN WHILE SHE SCARED THE HECK OUT OF THEM WITH THE GRISLIEST HALLOWEEN STORIES YOU HAVE EVER HEARD.



...AND SO..HEH HEH HEH WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE EVIL KING I PLACED IN A HOLLOW OF A ROTTEN OAK TREE! CACKLE CACKLE CACKLE

GOSH!  
Oooo...  
YAAAH... WHAT A LOTTA SOUP... WHY, THAT'S THE VERY REACTIONARY LITERATURE ADULTS WOULD HAVE US READ TO KEEP US KIDS FROM GROWING UP TO USURP THEIR POSITION IN SOCIETY!  
OH, QU ET! HAZEL IS A REAL WITCH.. AINTCHA, WITCH HAZEL?



OF COURSE! I'M A 100% -- 14TH GENERATION WITCH... WHY, THE SALEM BRANCH OF MY FAMILY WAS FAMOUS!  
OH YEAH...? THEN DO SOMETHING PROGRESSIVE WITH YOUR WITCHCRAFT... LIKE LIBERATING US BY BURNIN' DOWN P.S. 43!  
YEAH! SHOW US THAT!



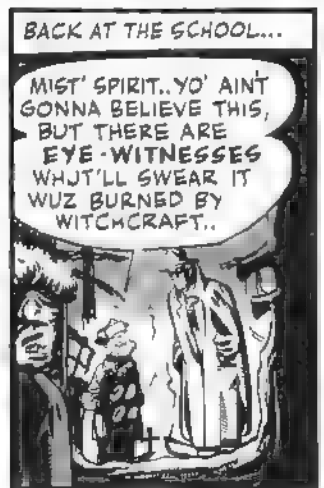
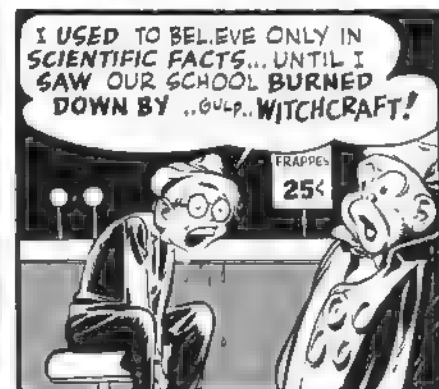
ER... WELL... GULP... AH... NOW I DON'T GUARANTEE THIS CURSE'LL WORK... HEH HEH... THIS HORSEHAR MAY BE OLD... STAND BACK!

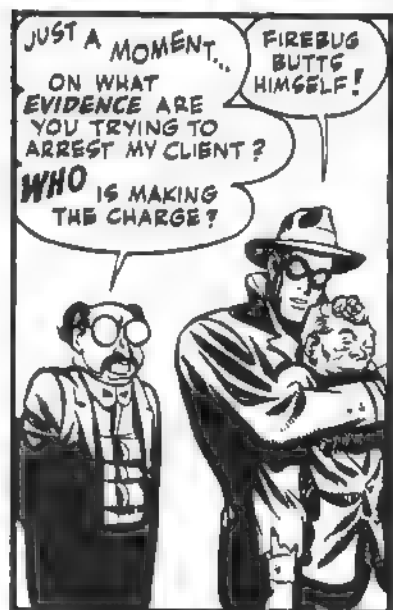
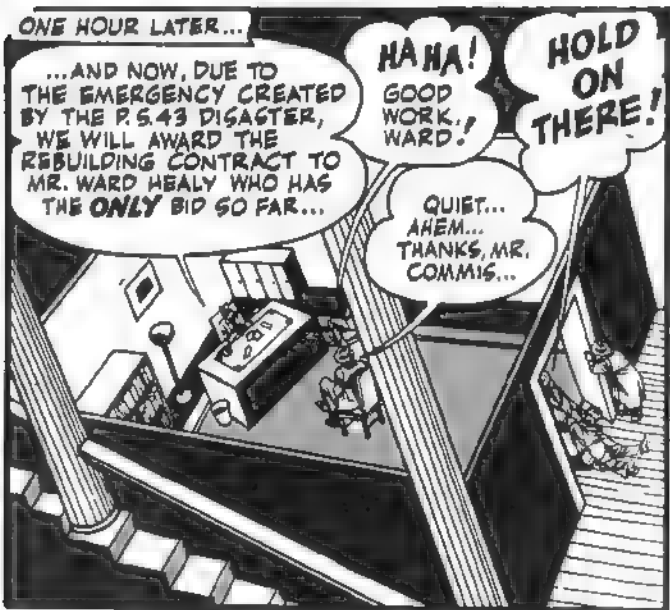


SHARDEBAH!!  
LOOK! SHE DID IT!  
EEEEK! THE SCHOOL IS AFIRE, SURE ENUF!



THE NEXT MORNING...











GENTLEMEN!.. THIS IS A DEVICE TO **FRAME** THAT POOR OLD LADY WITH A CRIME WE CAN TRACE TO **MR. WARD HEALY!**

GO ON, COUNSELOR

QUIET!

GENTLEMEN.. THE.. AH.. PROBLEM IS SIMPLE.. IF **WITCH HAZEL** DID **WILFULLY** AND WITH **MALICE** AFORETHOUGHT CAUSE THE SCHOOL TO BURN DOWN... TO WHICH I PRODUCE **EYE-WITNESSES...**

YES SIR, I SAW IT!

SURE.. WE **DOUBLE-DARED** HER AN SHE DID!

**YEAH!** BESIDES SHE ADMITS SHE LAID A CURSE ON IT WITH INTENT TO **BURN!**

SHE SAID **SHARDEBAH!**



...THEN THE QUESTION IS CLEAR.. IF SHE IS A WITCH... THEN IT FOLLOWS THAT SHE **COULD** LAY AN **EFFECTIVE** CURSE ON THE SCHOOL.

RIGHT...



So... **ARE YOU** OR **AREN'T YOU** A **WITCH** CAPABLE OF **WITCHCRAFT** ??



**YES.. I AM A WITCH..** AND MY POWERS COME FROM MY FAMILY LINE. I'M A 14<sup>TH</sup> GENERATION AMERICAN WITCH!



**WAIT!** SHE ONLY SAID THAT TO KEEP FROM DISAPPOINTING THOSE KIDS.. **TEST HER!**

VERY WELL... DO SOMETHING WITCHY... ER.. CHANGE US INTO **DOGS!**



GO ON, HAZEL... YOU C'N DO IT! GO ON...

ER AH.. BUT.. ER.. AH.. OH, VERY WELL... **G-SHARDEBAH**



**SEE?** IT DIDN'T WORK...

**QUITE!** THE CASE IS DISMISSED.. LACK OF PROOF...

BUT... IT'S JUST THAT I'VE BEEN **SCK** LATELY...

**FAKE!** **YAAAH!!** **FOOEY!**

**BAH**



**AND SO**...THE EYE OF WITCHCRAFT...THE HOLIDAY OF THE SPIRITS PASSES AWAY INTO TIME.... IN THE CEMETERIES THE EERIE MIST LIFTS AS A CHILLY AUTUMN BREEZE WAFTS ACROSS THE LAND.

FROM WILWOOD TO CAULDRON HILL THE WEE PEOPLE MAKE READY TO RETURN TO THE DARKNESS WHENCE THEY CAME....

**HALLOWE'EN IS OVER...**

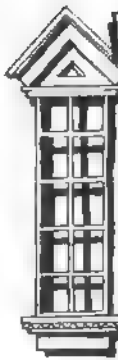
A LITTLE SADLY THIS YEAR..



IN THE COURTHOUSE TOO THE GUARDIANS OF OUR FUNDAMENTAL SAFETY SLOWLY GATHER THEIR BOOKS AND PREPARE TO LEAVE...

SIGH...THE FIRST WITCHCRAFT CASE IN 300 YEARS AND WE **LOSE IT!**

YES...ARF. ARF I COULD HAVE SWORN SHE WAS REALLY..ARF. ARF.



SAY THAT AGAIN?

I...ARF.. GRRROWL.. ARF...



GOOD GRIEF.. WOOF WOOF.. YOU'RE **BARKING!**

ARFARF.. SO ARE YOU.. GRRROWL!



WOOF?

ARE?



WOOF! WOOF!

ARF! ARF!



YEOW... IT WORKED...I'M A REAL HONEST-TO-BETSY SPELL-CASTIN' WITCH...**WAHOO!**

AND DO YOU KNOW THAT TO THIS VERY DAY NOT A SOUL IN CENTRAL CITY WILL BELIEVE HER STORY ABOUT THOSE TWO DOGS!!

....EXCEPT, OF COURSE...

..ME!



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# CACHE MCSTASH

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1948

**ACTION  
Mystery  
ADVENTURE**

**BACK TO SCHOOL..  
PHOOEY!**

AH DON'T SEE WHY AH HAVE T'GO  
T'SCHOOL... WHEN AH GROW UP AH  
WANT T'BE A **CRIMEFIGHTER**..AN'  
Y'DON'T HAVE T'KNOW NUFFIN'  
FOR THAT!

OH DON'T YOU? THERE'S  
A LOT OF BRAINWORK TO CRIME-  
FIGHTING...IT'S NOT ALL JUST  
SLUGGING CROOKS! SOMETIMES  
YOU'RE UP AGAINST A **SMART CROOK**..  
LIKE "CACHE" MCSTASH, FOR  
INSTANCE.

BY  
**Wm EIGNER**

SURE..THE **SMUGGLER**.  
HE HAD A **CODE** HE USED  
TO COMMUNICATE WITH  
HIS GANG WHICH  
**NOBODY** HAS BEEN  
ABLE TO BREAK... SEE  
THE PAPER HERE

CACHE  
MCSTASH?

**CRYPTOGRAM REVEALING  
MCSTASH'S TREASURE  
FOUND; POLICE TRY TO  
CRACK CODE**

CAN YOU READ THIS MESSAGE?  
IF YOU CAN, YOU'RE RICH IT  
CONTAINS KEY HIDEING PLACE  
OF TREASURE OF LAIT CACHE  
MCSTASH

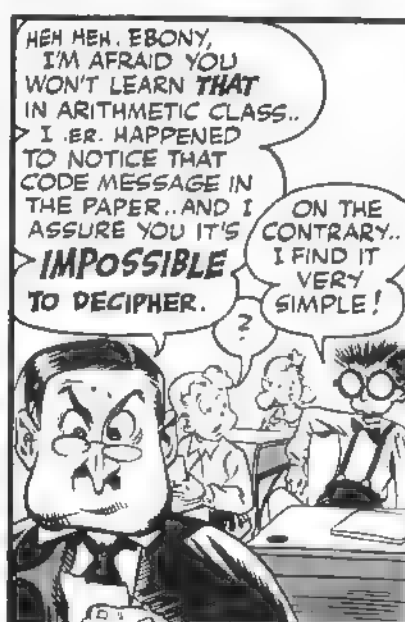
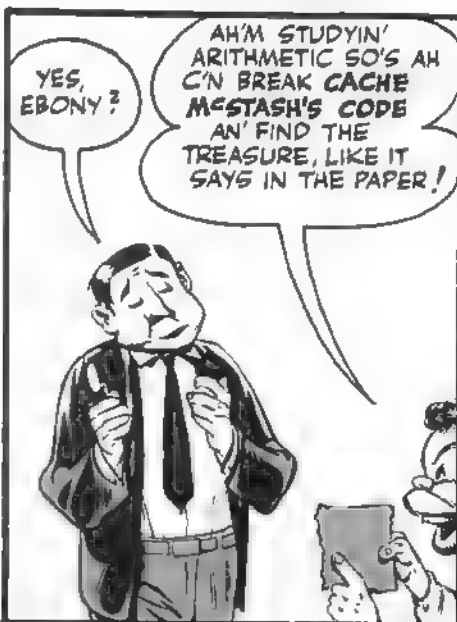
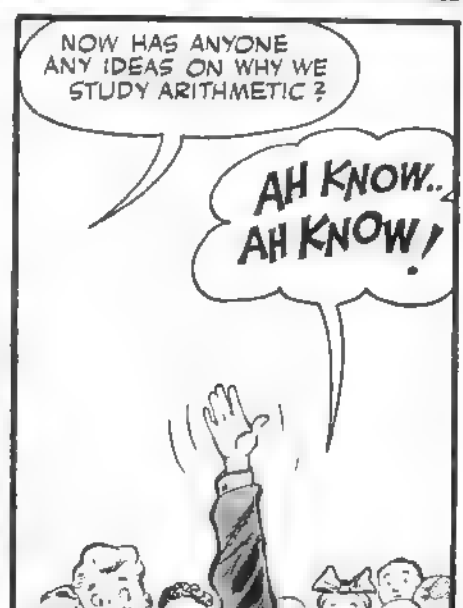
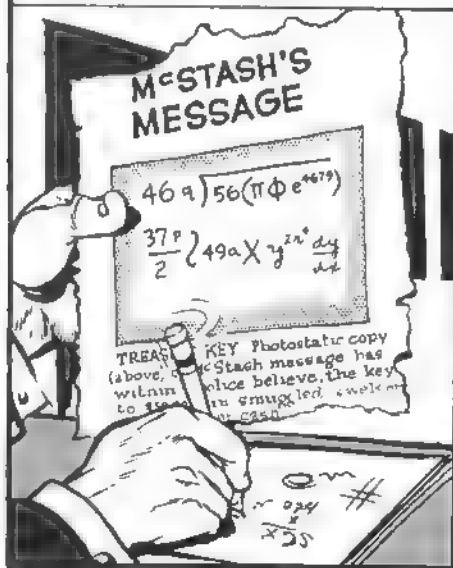
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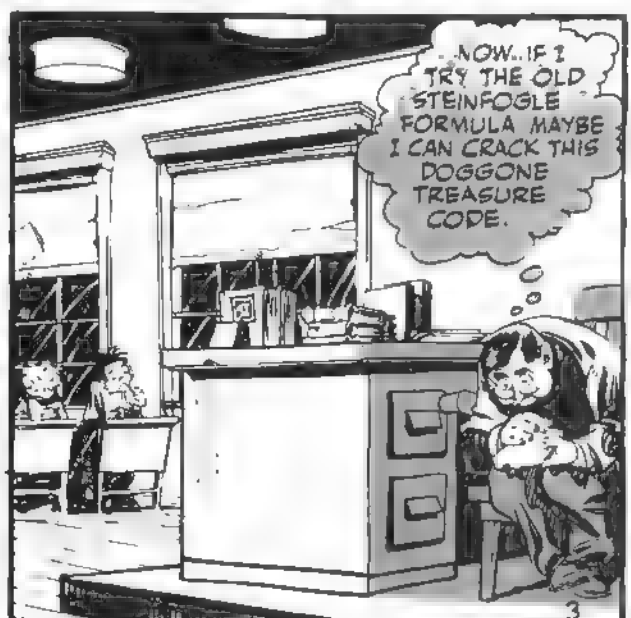
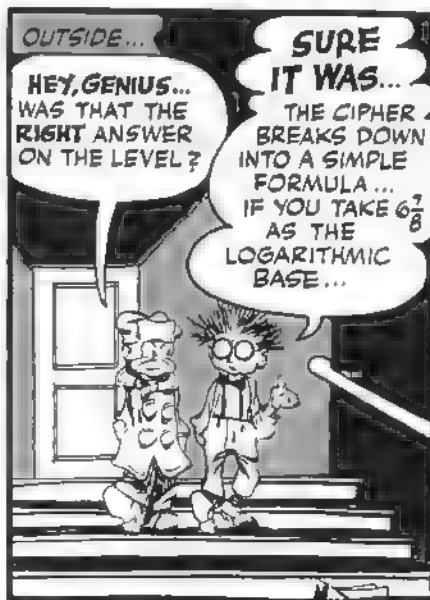
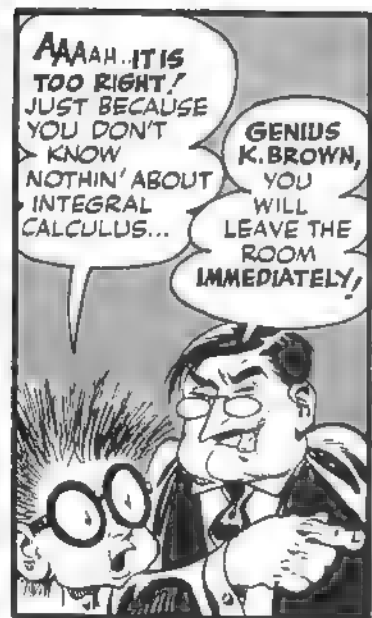
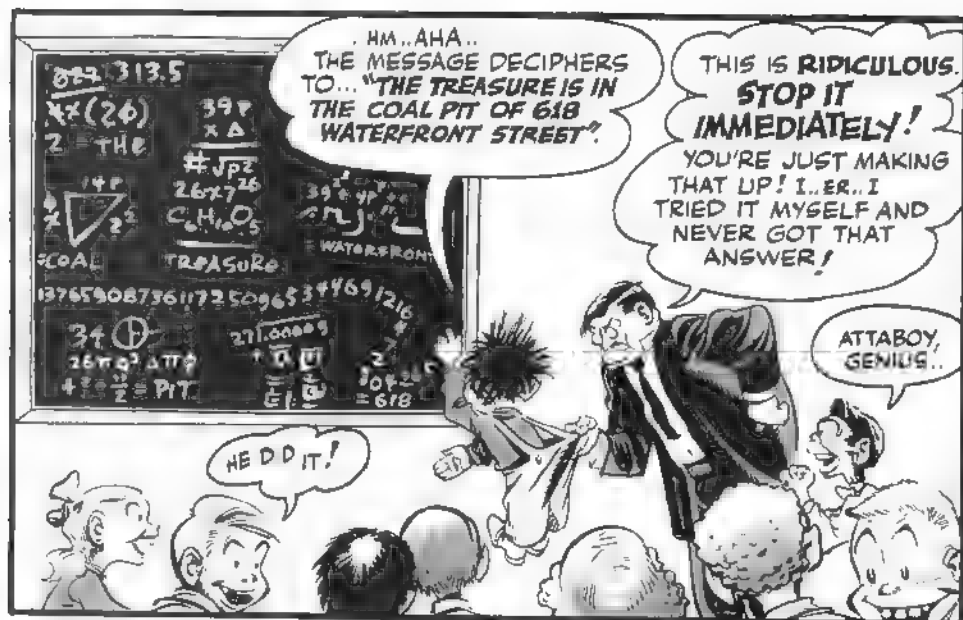
YO' MEAN  
ANYBODY FIGGERS  
THAT OUT FINDS A  
**TREASURE**?

UH MUH..AND  
PROBABLY ROUNDS UP  
THE LAST OF MCSTASH'S  
GANG, TOO... BUT IT TAKES  
A PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE  
OF MATHEMATICS..  
MCSTASH WAS A  
**MATHEMATICAL GENIUS**,  
YOU KNOW

##  
HATM  
\$



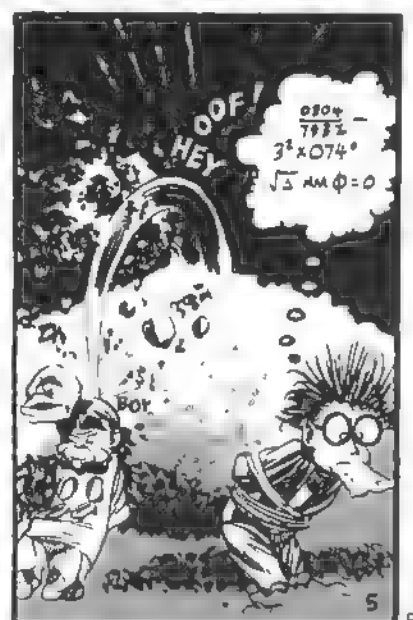


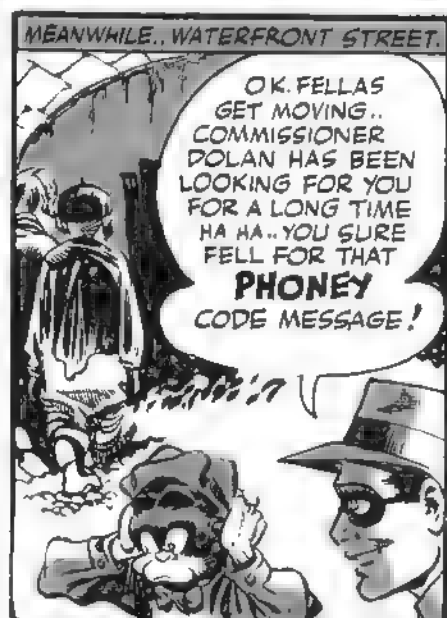
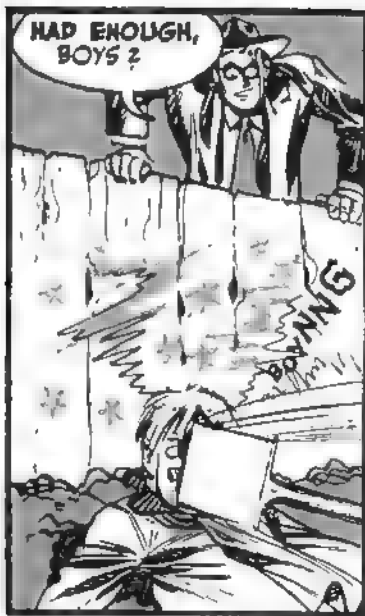


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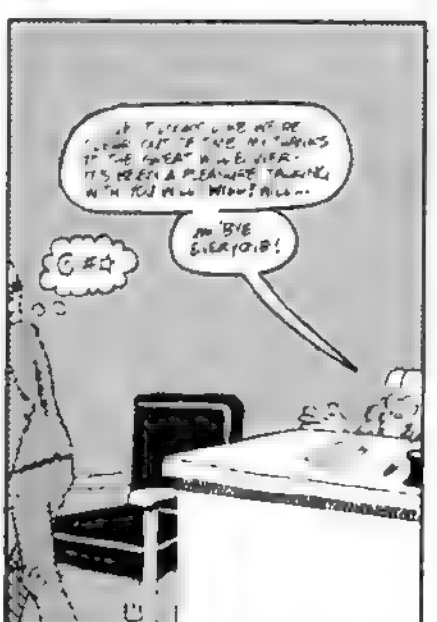
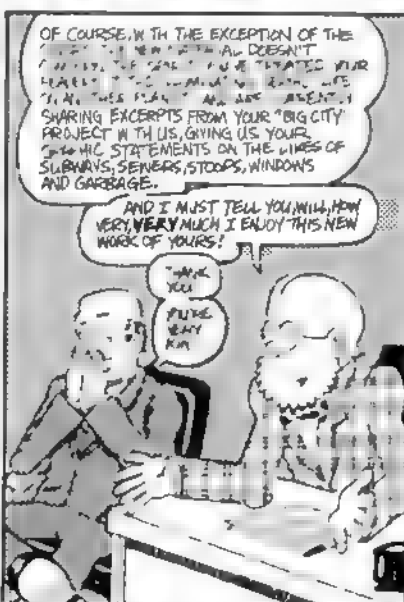
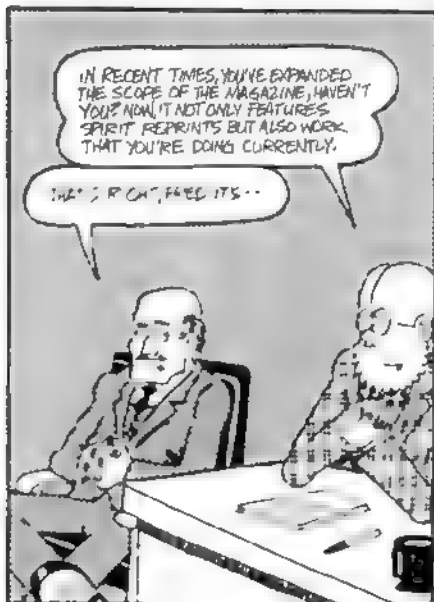
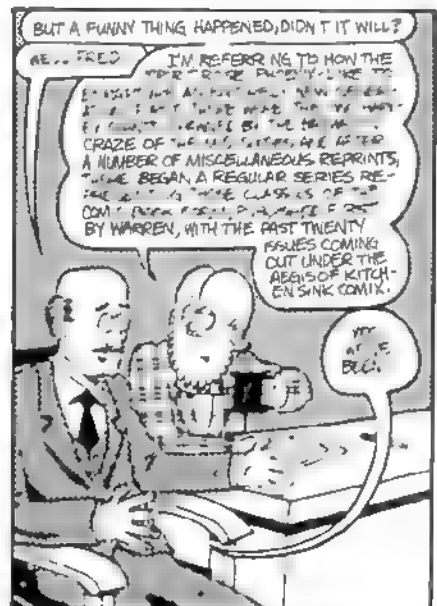
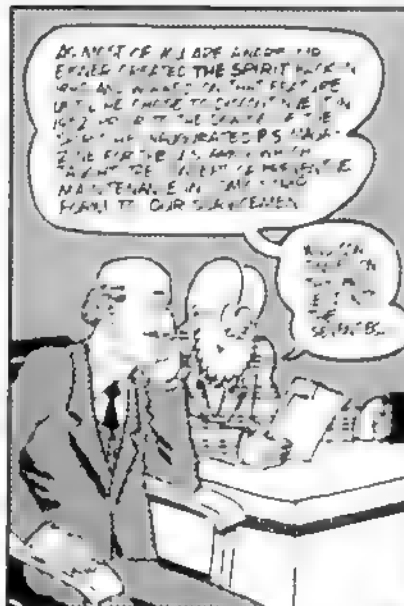
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HEMBECK, BE LARGE presents  
the **Will Eisner** INTERVIEW



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# LETTERS

## CRAYONS FOR CRITICS?

I've been reading your magazine for some time now and have enjoyed the old and the new material you present, particularly the "City" pieces and Mr. Eisner's fascinating interviews with his peers. I've written to show my support for the features and new material; I do not care if you print only one *Spirit* story every issue... the older I get the more detached I feel towards conventional heroic storylines. Press on with the new material and leave those who don't understand the new work to their crayons.

Kurt Sayenga  
WDIV-TV, Ann Arbor, Michigan

## ENGEL IS WRITE ON

While reading the Letters page in No. 39 I was disturbed by those readers that complained about the Eisner interviews and Will's recent work. I was about to write in praise of those features when I read the letter by Jim Engel. He said it all loud and clear, much better than I could have done myself. I knew there was something about that guy I liked.

Bob Binding  
6166 Powers Road, Orchard Park, NY 14127

## FETISH SEEMS APPARENT

Dr. Frederic Wertham was right! Comics are a depraving influence. Take the case of your correspondent Robert D. Null of 501 N. First Avenue, Maiden, NC. In his letter in issue No. 37 he said how glad he was that the seams of Ellen Dolan's stockings were visible in the Kitchen Sink reprints. And in issue No. 25 a certain Robert D. Hull (same address, different spelling — or misprint) wrote on the subject of Klaus Nordling's art. A detail he always looked for was the seams in Lady Luck's stockings.

Does your magazine encourage this overt fetishism?

If so, let's see some stocking tops as well. Cheesecake, Mr. Eisner?

John T. M. Dodds  
34 Harland, Scotstoun, Glasgow, Scotland

## TEXT FEATURES ARE MEAT

Reading the Letters pages recently, I have noticed pressure against the text features, techniques and thoughts about the comics form. It has surprised me because these are the pages I've found to most increase my enjoyment of comics. It's the meat.

I've gotten so much from slowly reading these stories over the years that I can sympathize with someone wanting more stories. I'm glad there are still holes in my back issue collection that I can fill whenever I need to read "new" reprints.

John Dowdell  
1351 5th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94122

## BLUBBER/BARRA QUESTIONS

A couple of questions about *Spirit* 39: Who is the eskimo boy named Blubber?

Also, the Veta Barra story was a bit of a curiosity. The character of Veta Barra is the same as Mrs. Ferguson in the "Gulity Gun" story in Warren *Spirit* No. 4 and *Spirit Color Album, Volume I*. And on page 56, the first three panels of the last strip seem to be by a different artist (the style resembles Klaus Nordling's *Lady Luck*.)

Kiyoshi Najita  
5654 S. Harper, Chicago, Illinois 60637

Kiyoshi: Those are two very good questions and here are their two interesting (I hope) answers...

Blubber was an Eskimo boy who adopted The Spirit during a short period in 1946 while Ebony was away at school. He first appeared on February 16 and left when Ebony returned for good on May 12. During that time he teamed up once with a visiting Ebony and acted as The Spirit's sidekick in a number of stories. If you have Warren *Spirit* No. 15, you will find him in the story called "The Fly." Other reprints featuring Blubber have appeared in Police Comics, the 1W/Super Spirit, Quality Spirit, etc.

As you noted, Veta Barra makes use of previous Spirit art. The script was by Jules Feiffer, who specialized in "refrying" old Spirit stories, developing framing devices for non-Spirit work which was to be converted into Spirit stories, and generally handling fill-ins and reprints. This was Eisner's second-to-last Spirit story, and he was obviously looking for a way out. Klaus Nordling is indeed the assistant and ghost artist — and you have sharp eyes for spotting his contributions. Spirit fanatics can amuse themselves by picking out the Nordling ghost art during this period: unlike other assistants, he always modeled any character he drew on a previously existing one, even when sketching in bystanders and minor supporting cast members. Good examples are the story featuring Three Dolans ("Help Wanted" in Warren *Spirit* No. 10) and the tale of Henry J. Timeclock ("The Hero," in Warren *Spirit* No. 14). Both of these 1950 episodes feature slightly re-used art or characters swiped with Will's permission from previous all-Eisner stories. —cat

## ON COLOR & ALBATROSSES

There may only have been two months between issues 39 and 40, but the difference between the two stands out like night and day. The most dramatic improvement is the color section. I had to wear 3-D glasses to get through earlier color sections. All I know is that the new method (with twice as many color pages yet!) is vastly superior — in fact, this might well be the ideal. As Jim Engel, among others, has commented, I, too, prefer the standard comic book coloring over previous attempts to "paint" the strip; if my mind can flesh out the two-dimensional images on the page into moving, real characters, it can do the same with flat, obvious colors in a limited palette. After all, the whole medium is essentially a complex visual shorthand that requires constant decoding by the reader; as such, its refinements need be only those of graphic, not mechanical, technique. The main problem with previous attempts at painterly approaches to color (other strips as well as *The Spirit*)

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I AM WILLING TO PAY UP TO \$30 FOR A hardcover signed edition of *The Art of Will Eisner*. Contact Dan F. Howard, 6803 Hawkins Bend, Lincoln, NE 68506. (907) 488-8695.

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is, in my opinion, that they require an equally sophisticated reproduction method, which revealed every brush-stroke and blown-on stipple. The eye is made too aware of the fact that it is looking at paint and ink; there's too much medium and not enough message getting through.

Anyway, there's no such problem on "Johnny Marsten." The original colors came through—I can't avoid the adjective—perfectly. I know that this process has to cost more, but it's money well-invested. This is the sort of treatment Eisner's classics deserve; I only regret that it wasn't used from the beginning.

In fact, just about every aspect of this latest issue is elbowing for some of my free-flowing superlatives. The last chapter of the "Big City" saga lived up to the quality of previous chapters, and left me waiting in anticipation for its publication in book form. And the Kubert "Shop Talk" was perhaps the best so far in a long line of such interviews—abetted, again, by the excellent use of illos and color (which was superior here too. Whoever colored this should be doing the *Color Albums!*)

Notice how I've gone this far without a single complaint that there were "only" four *Spirit* stories? To be honest, I read through the issue twice before I even noticed this mini-drawback, such was its quality. Is there any truth to the rumor that you are considering "splitting" off the *Spirit* stories into a high-quality comic-size book and renaming the magazine *Eisnermania* or something? Such a move would quell the "too few stories" complaints, and open up a new corner of the market—the kids who are still just buying comics off the racks. The move also would allow Will's creativity some room to move and breathe again without being stifled by the blue-masked weight of his rep. I know how galling it must be for someone as broadly talented and relentlessly experimental as Eisner is to be continually told that his peak was reached over thirty years ago (however false that may be). Ah, well. Conan Doyle was hounded for life by Sherlock Holmes. Nixon will go to his grave rattling the bones of Watergate; considering the available birds, at least Eisner seems to have the better albatross.

Mark A. Worden  
3024 Woodland Hills, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

## PREFERS NEW EISNER WORK

Two comments: in the letter col of recent issues, some readers assert that they want only Eisner's *Spirit* work from the 40s and 50s, declaring that they are uninterested in his latest work. I wish to emphatically state my disagreement with this sentiment. Please pass on the message that there are a great many readers who are much impressed with Eisner's current work and want to see more of it.

Also, Eisner's essays on comic art as well as his discussions with other artists are welcome features of this magazine. I hope for their continuance.

Noel Byrne  
330 West Sierra Ave., Cotati, CA 94928

Editor's Note: Those readers who prefer Will Eisner's new stories and text features will wel-

come publication of WILL EISNER'S QUARTERLY later this year. Those who prefer the reprints will welcome the new full-color bi-monthly *SPIRIT* comic book which will reprint every post-war *Spirit* story in chronological order beginning in October. Hopefully, many of you will want to read both. More details are in Cat's opening column and the ad on pages 60-61. —dk

## SHOP TALK APPRECIATED

Thank you very much for publishing the brilliant *Spirit Magazine*. I'm not going to rave about the marvelous reprints of the classic old *Spirit* stories, nor about the fantastic new work by Mr. Eisner.

No. The praise this time goes to the "Shop Talk" sections. There is within Will Eisner a contagious enthusiasm for this medium we all enjoy; an enthusiasm which shows through in every interview, regardless which side of the questioning he is on.

At a time when most people in the industry seem to take pleasure taking pot shots at each other, it is incredible to see that Eisner has such a pleasant manner. The interviews tell us how the industry ran years ago without dragging up the dirt about fellow professionals.

Were that there were more like him. How many of today's creators will still be testing the creative limits of the field after half a century in the genre?

Desmond W. Roden  
Box 350, Hamilton, Brisbane 4007, Australia

## IMPRESSED WITH NEW COLOR

I was mightily impressed and delighted with *Spirit* No.40, especially the color pages. It was such a dramatic change for the better from that awful, off-register, washed-out color in the previous issues that I trust you'll never have to devote half the letter column to caterwaulings about coloring again. Also enjoyed the interview with Joe Kubert and, of course, the gorgeous new "City" pages.

Joe Pilati  
Corporate Campaign, 80 8th Ave., NYC 10011

## MAD MONA LIKES COLOR

The color section in *Spirit* No.40 was really done *nice* this time, not blurry like earlier few that appeared. And, again, the interview by Will Eisner—of Joe Kubert—was the highlight of the issue. One reason I follow this magazine has been to read these interviews. Sometime in the future it would be nice to compile all the interviews into one book. The magazine is really well done.

Mad Mona Muneco  
P.O. Box 9382, San Antonio, Texas 78204

## LIFE ON ANOTHER PLANET

Great color in *Spirit* No.40! Too bad the first four had to be crummy. The rest of your magazine is fine, though I'm not too crazy about an interview in every issue. When you publish *Life On Another Planet* eventually I hope it will be in hardcover.

Karl H. Richter  
no address

Karl: We changed printers to improve the color. You can be sure that the current standard is the one we will maintain. As for reprinting "Life On Another Planet," we will be releasing it this fall not only in a hardcover edition, but in full color as well! —dk

## NEW EISNER ART EXCITING

I want to thank you for the new Will Eisner artwork. This is an exciting time in comics. Many new independent companies are starting and the established corporations are stretching out. However, all I seem to see is better quality blood and guts and tits an' ass. I was hoping this expansion would give comics a chance to grow up. Fortunately, Will Eisner always has and continues to create and expand the standards of comic art for all ages of readers. Keep 'em coming!

John Hayman  
259-A Chestnut Hill Rd, Montague, MA 01351

## DEPT. OF LOOSE ENDS

(continued from page 1)

Ken" who received his training in Tibet) and Bob Powell handled the art. Within one or two issues Powell was scripting as well as drawing the series, and the feature is one of the best examples of his beautiful linework. It might be noted that Bob Powell had certain non-mystical interests which he tended to insert into this series. Among these were a love of cars and airplanes, and a particular proficiency for drawing birds and animals. In "The Paradise of Lin," short as it is, Powell managed to work in a few panels of animal art, but his best efforts in this story were reserved for the spectacular nude astral-plane fight scene between Mystic and the evil Ganga Lin. Not enough praise has been given to the late Bob Powell, but perhaps with the republication of this beautiful work, his name will once again be revered by comics fans, as well it should be.

Our other pre-war *Spirit* story, "Radio Station WLXX," is a one-shot which needs no further explanation. For more on Hazel P. Macbeth, who appears here in a 1947 story, refer to my column in issue No.37. Nothing more need be said about the 1948 vintage "Cache McStash," which co-stars Ebony and his school friend, Genius K. Brown.

"Enterprise" is another Ebony White vehicle, and it co-features Ebony's cousin, the zoot-suited Suremoney White, a fountain pen entrepreneur. Knowledgeable fans will recognize Jack Spranger's pencils on most of this episode, with Eisner's contribution seemingly limited to inking the work and redrawing the passages which involve The Spirit, Dolan, Ellen and F.B.I. agent Jim Handy in a more "realistic" secondary plot.

And that, dear readers, tucks the very last "loose end" into place. Thus ends this column... but fear not, the intrepid footnoter will return in the first issue of the new colour *Spirit* comic book under a new byline: "The Central City Zeitgeist."

See ya in the funny pages!

—cat yronwode



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